

# What is depression?

Depression (also known as major depression, major depressive disorder, or clinical depression) is a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working. According to National Institute of Mental Health depression can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and home.

## Key Symptoms

To be diagnosed with depression, symptoms must be present for at least two weeks and must represent a change from previous functioning. At least five of the following symptoms must be present, with at least one of the symptoms being either

(1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure:

Depressed mood: Feeling sad, empty, or hopeless most of the day, nearly every day.

Loss of interest or pleasure: Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day.

Significant weight change: Weight loss when not dieting, weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.

Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt: Nearly everyday

Sleep disturbances: Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day.

Difficulty thinking or concentrating: Indecisiveness, nearly every day

Fatigue or loss of energy: Nearly every day.

Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt: Nearly every day

Recurrent thoughts of death: Suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.

The symptoms must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Additionally, the symptoms must not be better explained by another medical condition, substance use, or bereavement.