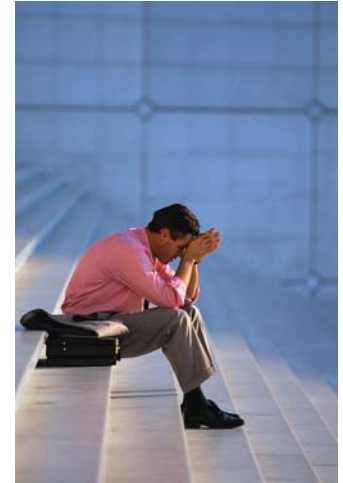


Warning Signs of Depression

Feeling sad or out of sorts more often than not? You're not alone. While depression often follows a personal loss or traumatic event, it may also develop for no apparent reason. It can develop slowly over a period of months or come on suddenly. If you're wondering whether you're suffering from a minor emotional setback or something more serious, look for these warning signs of depression:

- **Sadness:** You may feel empty, sad or just down all the time, or experience a kind of emotional numbness. You may cry or feel like crying a lot of the time. Sadness is part of life; however, constant sadness is not.
- **Irritability:** You may be more easily upset by routine things or find yourself easily irritated. We all get angry over important matters or have bad days, but take note if getting bothered by little things has become the norm for you.
- **Anxiety:** You make mountains out of molehills. You have an upset stomach or feel restless. You're frequently pre-occupied with minor concerns or are worried a lot.
- **Loss of Interest:** You no longer find pleasure in activities you used to find enjoyable, such as hobbies and the company of other people.
- **Neglect:** You find yourself neglecting personal care or personal responsibilities. You fall behind at work or school, forget to pay your bills or begin to neglect your personal appearance and hygiene.
- **Eating Habits and Sleeping Habits:** You see a change in your eating habits, whether that's in the form of eating more or less. You gain weight or lose weight without consciously dieting. You have difficulty falling asleep, wake up too early, or even spend the day in bed.
- **Fatigue and Low Energy:** You feel tired all the time and/or have a low energy level. Your body movements may be slow or you may talk more slowly.
- **Attention, Memory and Concentration:** You find it hard to concentrate and keep your mind focused. Thus your working or studying patterns may suffer. Making decisions can become difficult and painful. You find yourself forgetting things more often.
- **Mood Shifts:** You experience big mood swings, going from high to low in a very brief period of time.
- **Helplessness:** You become overwhelmed by stress and feel you have no control over your life. You feel helpless to change things for the better.
- **Worthlessness and Guilt:** You feel you are just not as good as others around you. You feel guilty for no apparent reasons.
- **Negative Thinking:** You find yourself negative about almost everything. While those around you take a more balanced view you find yourself always defending a pessimistic point of view.
- **Hopelessness:** You feel things will never get better and become totally pessimistic. Reassurances from others may have little or no impact. The future looks dark and negative.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Headaches, digestive disorders, pain, and respiratory disorders that seem to persist and do not respond to treatment are commonly associated with depression.
- **Alcohol:** To find relief you find yourself drinking more than you should or using legal or illegal substances in a vain attempt to feel better.
- **Thoughts of Death or Suicide:** You begin to think about your own death or even of taking your life.



If any one of these signs is now part of your life, consider seeking professional help. Depression is not likely to go away by itself, and it usually gets worse if left untreated.