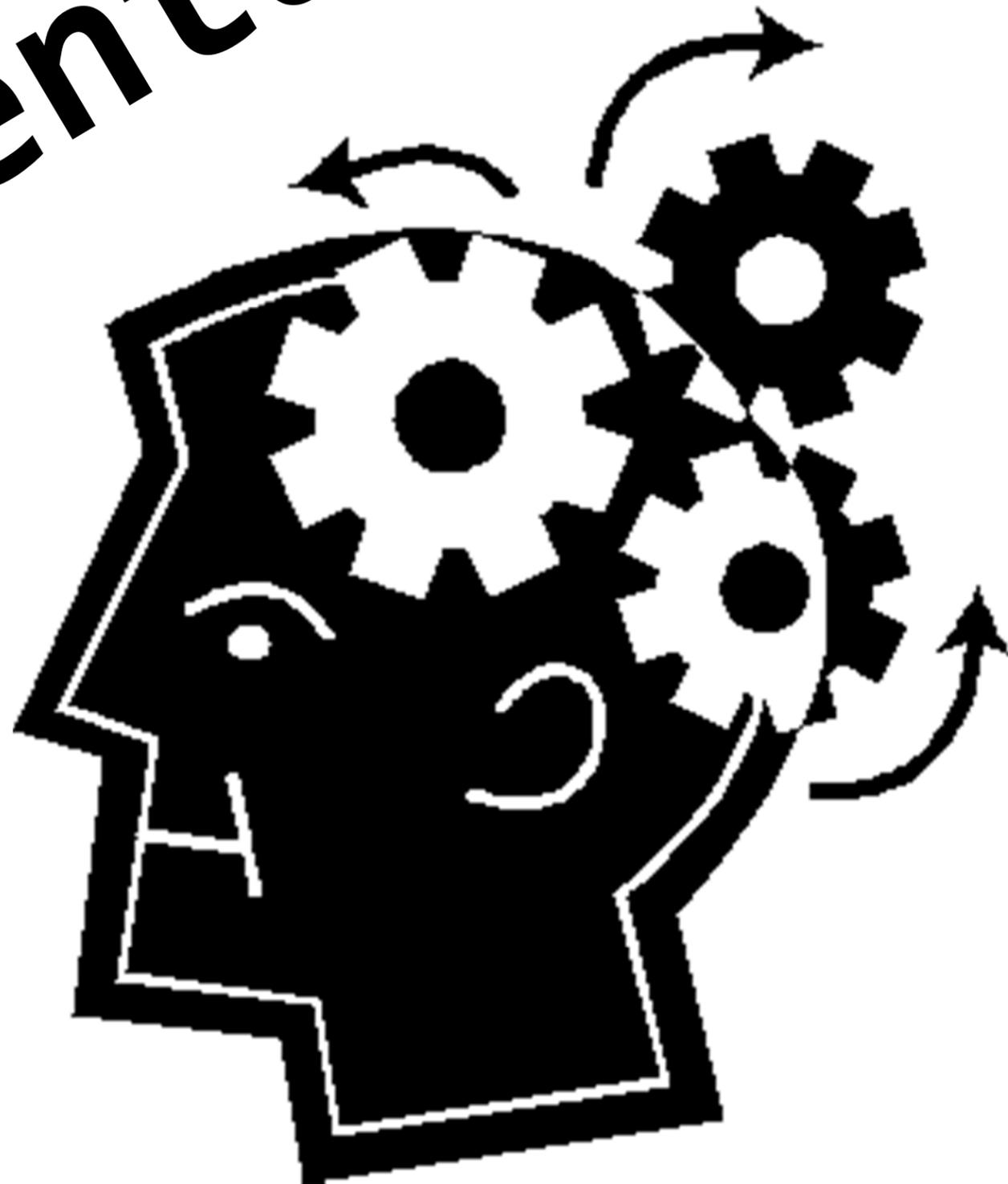


Mental

Health



Awareness

Causes of Depression

Research indicates that depressive illnesses are disorders of the brain.

There is often a **combination** of the causes of depression:

Abuse.	Past physical, sexual, or emotional.
Medications.	Some drugs for high blood pressure (beta-blockers or reserpine).
Conflict.	Personal conflicts or disputes with family members or friends.
Death or loss.	Sadness or grief from a death can increase the risk of depression.
Genetics.	Family history of depression may increase risk.
Major events.	Includes positive events (new job, graduating, getting married) or moving, losing a job, divorce, and retirement.
Serious illnesses.	Depression may coexist with a major illness or a reaction to the illness.
Substance abuse.	Nearly 30% people with substance abuse problems also have major or clinical depression.



How can I help?

...if it is a loved one who is depressed?

- Make an appointment [doctor, therapist] or go with him/her if they already have one.
- Offer emotional support, understanding, and encouragement.
- Listen carefully.
- Never dismiss feelings, but point out realities and offer hope.
- Never ignore comments about suicide, and report them to his/her therapist or doctor.
- Invite them on walks, outings, and other activities. Keep trying if they decline, but don't push them too much too soon.
- Remind them that with time and treatment, the depression will lift.

...if it is myself who is depressed?

- Do not wait too long to get evaluated or treated. Research indicates that the longer one waits, the greater the impairment can be down the road.
- Be active and exercise. Do an activity you once enjoyed.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Break up large tasks into small ones; set some realistic priorities.
- Spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative.
- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. Often, sleep and appetite will begin to improve before your depressed mood lifts.
- Postpone important decisions (marriage, divorce, changing jobs) until you feel better. Discuss decisions with others.

Prevention of Depression

Depression is highly treatable through good health habits. However, some forms may not be preventable since it is triggered by a chemical malfunctioning in the brain.

Get in the habit!

- Proper diet, exercise
- Taking time out for fun and relaxation
- Not overworking
- Saving time to do things you enjoy



Risk Factors

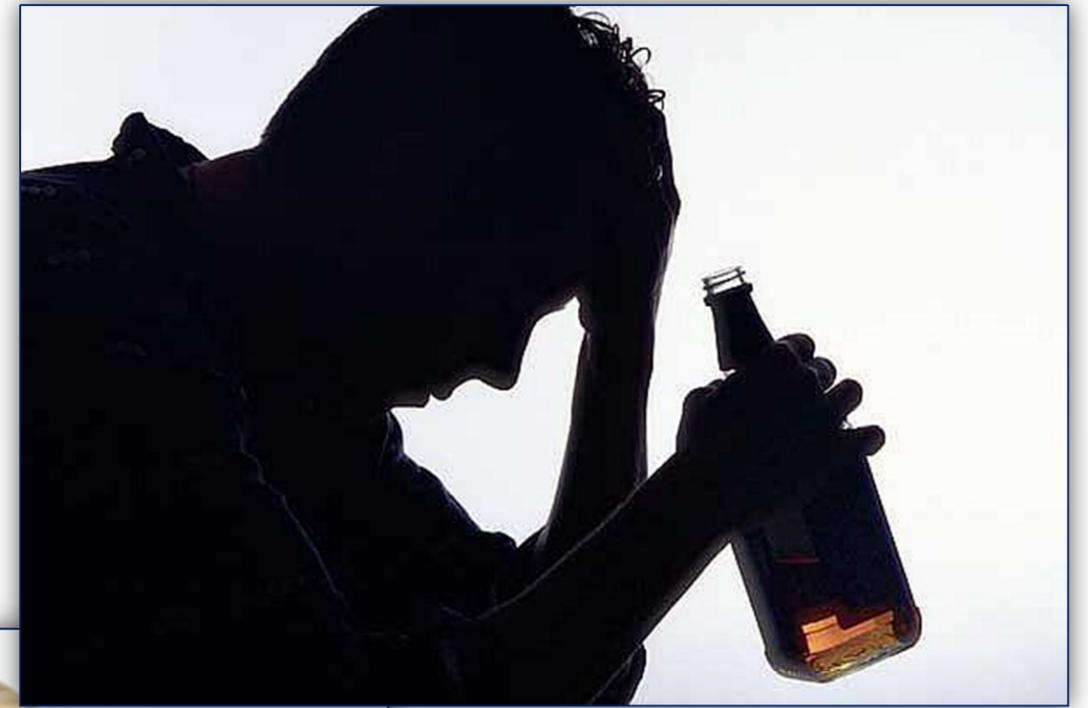
Depression typically begins in the **late 20s** but can happen at any age. The following factors appear to increase the risk of developing or triggering **depression**:

- Biological relatives with depression
- Females
- Traumatic experiences as a child
- Family history of alcoholism
- Family members who have committed suicide
- Experiencing stressful life events (ex. death of loved one)
- Few friends or personal relationships
- Recently given birth
- Depressed mood as a child
- Serious illness
- Low self-esteem, overly dependent, self-critical, pessimistic
- Busing alcohol, nicotine or illicit drugs
- Being poor
- Taking certain high blood pressure medications or sleeping pills

Signs & Symptoms

The **severity**, **frequency**, and **duration** of symptoms vary depending on the individual and his/her particular illness.

- Persistently sad, anxious, or 'empty' feelings
- Hopelessness or pessimism
- Guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Lose interest in activities or hobbies that were once pleasurable - including sex
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps that do not ease with treatment



What is Depression?

Every so often, we get the 'blues,' which passes within a couple of days. When you have depression, it **interferes with daily life** and **causes pain for both you and those who care about you.**

Depression is a common but serious illness.

It is defined by at least **five** of the following occurring simultaneously for at least **two weeks** in adults:

- Depressed mood during most of the day, particularly morning
- Fatigue, loss of energy
- Feelings worthlessness or guilty
- Impaired concentration, indecisiveness
- Insomnia, hypersomnia (excessive sleeping)
- Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in almost all activities almost everyday
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide
- Restlessness
- Significant weight loss or gain

Brought to you

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Resources:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/>

<http://webmd.com/>

<http://nimh.gov/>