

DEPRESSION IN MEN

What is depression?

It's common for people to feel sad, lonely, or angry when they're going through a rough time. They might have trouble sleeping, and they might not want to do things they usually enjoy. But when these feelings don't go away, it could be something more. It could be depression.

Depression is a very common condition. In fact, about 1 in 12 men in the United States has depression. For many men, depression can make it difficult to get through the day.

What does depression feel like?

Depression affects people differently. For example, some people feel unhappy, but they don't know why. Other people have symptoms that are more severe, like thoughts of suicide. Age and family history can affect how each person experiences depression.

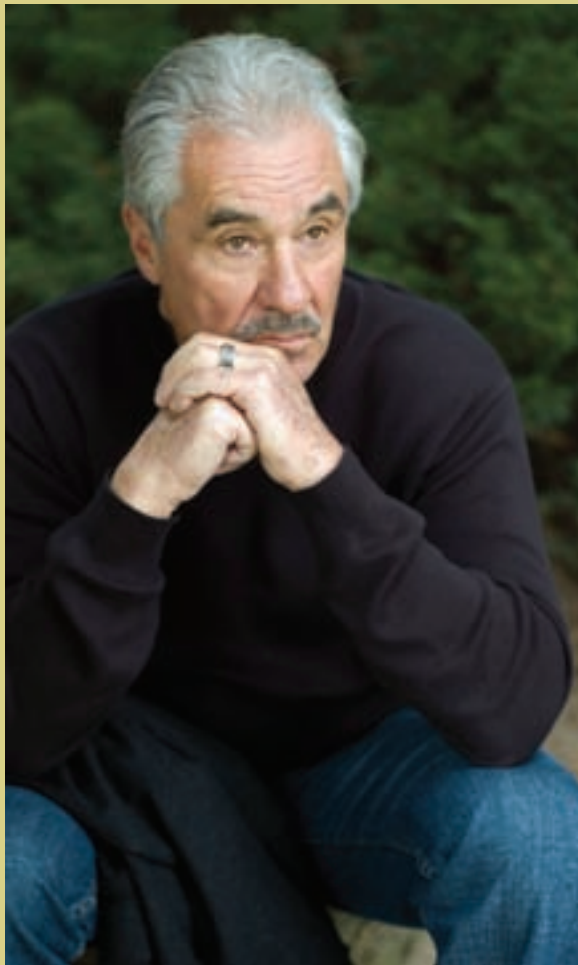
Gender is also a factor: men and women experience depression in different ways. For example, men with depression are more likely than women with depression to:

- Feel tired
- Become frustrated or irritated
- Lose interest in things they used to enjoy doing
- Have trouble sleeping



"I've been working late every night, and I'm so tired all the time. My wife is always nagging me to help out more with our new baby. Sometimes I just need to get away from everything. What's the big deal if I want to have a few beers by myself sometimes?"

—Jim,* 32



“I’ve always been pretty unhappy. Now I lost my job, and it’s causing a lot of stress at home. I feel like a total loser. It’s just not right—I’m supposed to be the man of the house! Sometimes I think my wife and kids would just be better off without me around.”

—Manuel,* 59

Depression in men: a hidden condition

Experts believe that many men may have depression and do not know it. There are several possible reasons for this:

- Men are less likely to show obvious signs of depression, like crying or looking sad
- Men are more likely to use alcohol or drugs to cover up their depression
- Men often hide feelings that they think are signs of weakness

Men are also more likely than women to worry about what other people think of their depression. Some people have a negative view of those with depression or another mental condition. This negative view, called *stigma*, is one reason some men try to hide their depression. Because of this, men sometimes don’t get the proper treatment they need for their depression.

But if you have depression, it’s important to get help and take an active role in your treatment. That way, you can get the best care possible and get back to doing the things you used to enjoy.

Talking with your health care provider

If you have symptoms of depression, you might find it hard to talk about. You might think that only women should show emotion and that men are expected to be strong. But depression is not a sign of weakness. In fact, asking for help may be a good first step to getting better. Talk with your health care provider. Together, you can figure out a plan that can help you feel like yourself again.



How some men cope with depression

Most people with depression can feel better when they get the care they need. But some men cope with depression in ways that are not healthy. For example, sometimes men with depression:

- Hide their feelings. And if they do talk about how they're feeling, they're more likely to say they feel tired—not that they feel sad or lonely
- Drink too much alcohol or use drugs
- Become angry and violent—even abusive
- Do things that are risky or dangerous, such as driving recklessly
- Spend more time at work so they can avoid family and friends

Men are 4 times as likely as women to commit suicide. But men are less likely than women to show warning signs of suicide, such as talking about it. Also, once they start thinking about taking their own life, men are likely to try it more quickly than women. If you have had thoughts of suicide, it's important to get help now. Be sure to talk with your health care provider right away.

If you are thinking about taking your own life, do one of these things right away:

- Call 911
- Go to the nearest emergency room
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) to talk with a trained counselor (available 24 hours a day)



Depression can be treated

Often, men with depression don't want to talk about how they're feeling. They might suppress their emotions because they think of depression as a sign of weakness. This may prevent them from getting the treatment they need. But it's important to know that depression can be treated. In fact, 80% of people with depression can get the care they need to help them feel like themselves again.

There are many options for treating depression. Most people do best by using both of these options in their treatment plan:

- **Talk therapy.** With talk therapy, you speak with a mental health counselor about your thoughts, feelings, and mood. This can help you understand your depression so that you can deal with it better
- **Medicines.** Depression is often treated with medicines called *antidepressants*. Medicines affect people in different ways. That's why you might need to try a few antidepressants before you find one that works best for you. Your health care provider may change your dose, ask you to try a different medicine, or add another medicine to the one you're currently taking.

Taking care of yourself

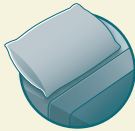
Medicine and talk therapy are usually effective ways to treat depression. But there are changes you can make in your daily life that can also help. These are some things you can try:



Eat right. Every day, eat a variety of healthy foods including lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.



Be more active. Being active can help improve your mood and keep you healthy. It can also give you more energy and help you sleep better. Talk with your health care provider before you change your activity level.



Sleep well. Getting too much sleep or not enough sleep can affect your mood. Try to wake up at the same time each morning and go to bed at the same time each night. If you have trouble sleeping at night, avoid sleeping during the day. Daytime naps can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night.



Find support. It might be helpful to talk with people who have had depression. Talk with a friend who has gone through something like what you're feeling now, or join a support group. You can share helpful tips for coping, and it can remind you that you're not alone.



Reach out. Talk with friends, family, and other loved ones. Show interest in how they're doing and what's going on in their lives.



Get involved. Having a hobby may help give you a feeling of pride and success. Think of things you used to enjoy, and start doing those things more often. You might want to take classes, do volunteer work, or get involved with local activities or groups.



Tracking your progress

As you continue with your treatment, it might be hard for you to notice the small changes each day that show you're getting better. The table below can help you keep track of your progress. **Every day for a week, put a check in the box next to each thing that is true for you that day.** There is a blank space at the end of each category (Symptoms, Treatment, Lifestyle) for your own ideas. There are also blank spaces at the bottom of the table where you can write about your mood, important things that happened, or anything else you want to keep track of. Share your results with your health care provider or counselor at your next appointment.

	DAY OF THE WEEK						
Symptoms	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
I feel tired/I'm having trouble sleeping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel frustrated/easily annoyed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I've been drinking alcohol/using drugs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I'm not interested in things I used to enjoy doing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I've been thinking about death or suicide	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I'm avoiding my family and friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Treatment							
I took my medicine	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I went to talk therapy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I went to my support group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lifestyle							
I ate healthy foods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I did something active	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I spent time with a friend/family member	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I did something I enjoy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My own ideas							
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Remember—recovery is possible if you get the treatment you need. Work with your health care provider to figure out a plan that can help you feel like yourself again.

For more information about depression, visit or call:

Helpguide.org: www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_men_male.htm

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org or 1-800-273-8255