



# Depression in Men

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## What is depression?

**Depression** is a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, and/or working.

## Depression can affect any man at any age and may present with a variety of signs and symptoms:

- Anger, irritability or aggressiveness
- Feeling anxious, restless, or “on the edge”
- Loss of interest in work, family, or once-pleasurable activities
- Problems with sexual desire and performance
- Feeling sad, “empty,” flat or hopeless
- Not being able to concentrate or remember details
- Feeling very tired, not being able to sleep, or sleeping too much
- Overeating or not wanting to eat at all
- Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- Physical aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems
- Inability to meet the responsibilities of work, caring for family, or other important activities
- Engaging in high-risk activities
- A need for alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawing from family and friends or becoming isolated.

## What does depression like in the male population?

- Depression rates among men have been estimated at 6%<sup>1</sup>. Rates among African-American men has been estimated at 10%<sup>2</sup>.
- Men may exhibit depression as anger, aggression or irritability, and are more likely to seek help for the physical symptoms more than emotional symptoms related to depression.
- Masculine role norms may cause men to feel embarrassed about their depression and prevent them from acknowledging their depression and seeking treatment.
- Some men may turn to drugs or alcohol to try to cope with their emotional symptoms.
- Men are more likely to die by suicide because they tend to use more lethal methods.

## How do you treat depression?

- Treatment for depression requires a collaborative effort involving the patient, medical providers, and behavioral health providers.
- Knowing the signs and symptoms listed above and risk factors listed below will help with early diagnosis and intervention with has been shown to reduce the length of time for treatment.
  - Family history of depression
  - Work, financial or relationship problems
  - Any type of loss or stressful situation
- It may take several weeks to feel better after starting treatment for depression. Your treatment plan may include the following:
  - Psychotherapy/counseling/meditation
  - Medications
  - Reducing stress and responsibilities
  - Spending time with family and friends to talk about your feelings
  - Diet and lifestyle modifications such exercising regularly and improving diet. Avoiding alcohol, marijuana and other recreational substances.

**How do you support someone who has depression?**

- Be patient and understanding and offer encouragement
- Listen carefully and engage in meaningful conversation
- Slowly increase physical and social activities. Too much too soon can be overwhelming.
- Support him in remembering appointments and taking medications. Encourage discussion of medication side effects or changes since starting the medications so they can be addressed by medical provider.
- Take serious comments about self-harm or harming others. You should contact his therapist or medical provide. **If in crisis, you should call 911, go to the nearest hospital emergency room or call the 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK(8255). Veterans can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, then press 1.**

**What can be done to raise awareness about depression in men?**

- Educate family, friends and health care providers on depression and how it may presently differently in men.
- Support your loved one by encouraging him to talk to a health care provider about the concerning signs and symptoms.
- Engage in community discussion to reduce stigma associated with depression and build a network of support, referrals and resources.

For more information on depression in men visit [The National Institute of Mental Health](#) webpage.

<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2014). Depression in the U.S. Household Population, 2009-2012.

<sup>2</sup>Ward, E. and Mengesha, M. (2013). Depression in African-American Men: A review of what we know and where we need to go from here. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*(83)203, 386-397. doi: 10.1111/ajop.12015.