

## Major Depressive Disorder

Major depressive disorder is defined as a mental health disorder involving at least two weeks of consistent feelings of low mood and psychological depression. Depression is a common, but serious mood disorder that effects an individual's thoughts, emotions, and their ability to do everyday tasks.



## Signs & Symptoms

Major depressive disorder can occur at any age, but most commonly occurs in adults. Signs and symptoms of depression occur nearly every day, all day for at least two weeks. Severity of symptoms can also range differently depending on the individual.

Someone with major depressive disorder might have:

- Feeling of sadness, emptiness, and hopelessness
- Insomnia or sleeping too much
- A reduced appetite or an increased appetite
- Reoccurring thoughts of death and suicide or attempt suicide
- Aches or pains that have no evident cause or that do not subside when treated

## Causes & Risk Factors

Although there is no exact known cause of major depressive disorder, it can be caused by many factors including brain chemicals and structure, hormones and genetic traits. Some forms of depression can occur under different circumstances like post-partum depression, seasonal affective disorder (SAD), or persistent depressive disorder. Risk factors that can increase a person's risk for developing MDD include but are not limited to:

- Family history of depression
- Traumatic or stressful events
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- History of other mental health disorders

## Diagnosis & Treatment

In order to diagnose and treat a patient with major depressive disorder, physicians or other mental health professionals complete a clinical assessment. Treatment plans typically consist of a psychotherapy. Medication in addition to psychotherapy can be effective if therapy alone does not result in improvement. Since no two people experience depression the same way, there can be a trial and error period in finding the best treatment for an individual.

Sources – Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007> and National Institute of Mental Health): <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>