



The risk for depression in women





## Your mood may be a sign of something more

It's common to feel sad, lonely, or angry when you're going through a rough time. You might have trouble sleeping. You might not want to do things you usually enjoy. But when these feelings last a long time, it could be depression.

### Depression in women is common.

Age and family history can affect how someone experiences depression. Gender is also a factor. In fact, women are about twice as likely to have depression as men. **There may be several reasons for this, such as:**

Women are about **twice as likely** to have depression as men.

#### Biology

Genes and hormone changes may increase a woman's chances of having depression.

#### Culture

Some aspects of our culture may add stress to women's lives. These include the expectations of managing a job and a household at the same time or being a caregiver to a loved one.



# Depression and biology

Women experience biological changes throughout their lives, especially during their period and during and after menopause. Any of these changes may cause depression.



## PMS and depression

You've probably heard of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Most symptoms of PMS start about a week before your period and end around the same time your period begins. Some women have a more severe form of PMS, called premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD). This may be caused by hormone changes during menstruation. **You might have PMDD if you feel overwhelmed by your PMS symptoms, such as:**

- Having mood swings
- Getting angry very easily
- Feeling anxious, sad, or hopeless

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## Menopause and depression

Most women stop having a monthly period when they are in their 40s to early 50s. This change in a woman's life is called menopause. Once a woman finishes menopause, she cannot get pregnant. **About 8 to 10 years before menopause, the body makes less of some kinds of hormones, which can cause many symptoms.**

These stages of life can also cause emotional symptoms. Many women may have mood swings, get annoyed easily, or feel sad. Many can also have feelings of anxiety or loss. Periods may be heavier, lighter, or less frequent than usual. **Other symptoms include:**

- Sudden feeling of warmth in the upper body, called hot flashes
- Night sweating that can soak through your clothes
- Uncomfortable or painful sex



# Depression during and after pregnancy

Pregnancy and childbirth can be very stressful. Plus, they cause many hormonal and physical changes in a woman's body. Experts believe these may be the reasons many women get depression after they have a baby.

**Postpartum depression (PPD) is a serious condition women may develop after their babies are born.** Talk to your healthcare provider if you are crying often, have trouble sleeping, or do not feel like eating after your baby is born.



## Your risk for PPD is higher if:

- You or a family member has had depression or another mental illness
- You don't have help or support from family and friends
- You have had bad feelings about your pregnancy
- You had problems with a pregnancy before

## Some things you can try to help your mood are:

- Rest whenever your baby is sleeping.
- Don't try to do everything yourself. Ask your friends, family, and other loved ones for help.
- Take some time to do things you enjoy, either alone or with loved ones.
- Don't hide your emotions. Instead, talk with loved ones about how you're feeling.
- Talk with other mothers. They may have been through something similar and can remind you that you're not alone.

# Depression in caregivers

You may take on many responsibilities. This can be especially true if you have children or are a caregiver to a spouse or parent. It can be easy to offer to do more things than you may be able to handle. The stress of being there for everyone in your life can become overwhelming. This might lead to depression.



**While being a caregiver can be rewarding, it can also cause health problems.** For example, a woman who is the caregiver of her spouse or parent is more likely to have symptoms of depression or anxiety.

**It's important to take care of yourself if you're a caregiver. Here are some things you can try:**

## Taking a break

Take a break by doing things you enjoy with other people in your life.

## Support groups

Join a support group for caregivers. You can learn helpful tips for coping. Plus, it can remind you that you're not alone.

## Counseling

Consider talking with a mental health counselor to help you understand and deal with your own emotions.

# Depression can be treated

If you have symptoms of depression, you might find it hard to talk about. But getting treatment as soon as you notice symptoms may help you feel better faster. Using talk therapy and medicine together works best for most people. For some women, adding hormone therapy to their treatment plan might also help, especially during menopause.

Talk to your healthcare provider about your options for treating depression. Together, you can come up with a plan that is right for you. **Many 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 and deal with it better.



## Medicines

Depression is often treated with medicines called antidepressants. Medicines affect people in different ways. Your healthcare provider might ask you to try a few different medicines or add another medicine to the one you're currently taking.



If at any time you feel like giving up or think you might hurt yourself, take action. Call 911, call your healthcare provider, or go to the emergency room right away.

**You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.**

# Taking care of yourself

Medicine and talk therapy are usually effective ways to treat depression. But some changes to your daily life can also help.



## These are some things you can try:



### Eat right

Eat a variety of healthy foods every day, including lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Also try to reduce how much coffee, soda, and alcohol you drink.



### 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 healthcare provider before you change your activity level.



### Sleep well

Getting too much sleep or not enough sleep can affect your mood. Aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. Try to wake up at the same time each morning and go to bed at the same time each night. Avoid taking daytime naps if you have trouble sleeping at night.



### Reach out

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



### Find support

It might be helpful to talk with people who have had depression. Talk with friends who have gone through something like what you're feeling now. They may have helpful tips for coping. You can also join a support group. It may remind you that you're not alone.



### 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.

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# Tracking your progress

As you continue with your treatment, it might be hard for you to notice the small changes that show you're getting better.

**For a week, put a check in the box next to each statement that is true for you that day.** Share your results with your healthcare provider or mental health counselor at your next appointment.

Symptoms	Sun		Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
I feel tired/I'm having trouble sleeping.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel frustrated/easily annoyed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been drinking alcohol/using drugs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm not interested in things I used to enjoy doing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I've been thinking about death or suicide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm avoiding my family and friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Treatment		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
I took my medicine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I went to talk therapy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I went to my support group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Lifestyle	Sun		Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
I ate healthy foods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I did something active.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I spent time with a friend/family member.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I did something I enjoy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Remember, depression affects people differently. Talk with your healthcare provider about how you're feeling and about any changes you notice.**



## Additional resources

Check out these organizations for more information about depression or how to find help:

### **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance**

[dbsalliance.org](https://dbsalliance.org) | 1-800-826-3632

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)  
1-800-273-8255