

Overcome Depression

It's a completely normal reaction to feel sad, fearful, or alone in the wake of a difficult life event, such as the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, the loss of a job, or other upsetting situation. When someone has depression, however, those feelings are more intense and tend to linger, and may even disrupt daily life. While the National Institute of Mental Health reports that [17.3 million Americans](#) a year experience some type of major depressive episode, depression is treatable and can be effectively managed.

Common signs and symptoms

While depression affects everyone differently – one person may find it difficult to sleep and feel agitated, whereas another is sleeping 10+ hours and feels sluggish – there are some common indicators. When the presence of these symptoms persists for at least two weeks, it's time to seek help by a medical or mental health professional:

- Feeling sad or empty
- Diminished interest or pleasure
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Sleep disturbances
- Agitation, restlessness, or lethargy
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Recurrent thoughts of death

There are also some *hidden signs of depression* that may be less obvious:

- Pretending to be happy
- Being less optimistic or positive than others
- Physical pain and health problems
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Low sex drive

Ways to prevent depression

Whether you're engaged in treatment or simply want to prevent depression, your lifestyle makes all the difference. Here are some things you can do each day to maintain a depression-free life:

Exercise regularly

Staying active is beneficial to your mental health in general and is a great way to calm your nerves and reduce stress.

Mind your diet

A healthy diet can help. Keep your meals balanced for optimal physical and mental health.

Form and maintain social relationships

Being social is vital to mental health and can ward off depression. Connect with friends and family regularly, attend events, and try new hobbies.

Restrict stress

Chronic stress is a common precursor to depression. Be careful not to over commit and allow some room for flexibility and self-care.

Cut down your options

Being presented with a lot of choices can be overwhelming for some people which can increase stress. Plan your meals, work outfits, etc. ahead of time to reduce your number of daily decisions.

Avoid unhealthy interactions

Steer clear of anyone who makes you feel bad about yourself or takes advantage of you, and don't participate in gossip.

Limit alcohol and drug use

Alcohol and drugs can contribute to depression and depression relapse. Be responsible about your daily intake and don't use alcohol or drugs to cope.

Use social media sparingly

Be mindful of your time spent on social media, as it can contribute to isolation and may be addicting for some people.

Sleep

Not getting enough sleep can contribute to depression, so put away your phone well before bedtime, and meditate or practice calming techniques to help you prepare for a good night's rest.

Seek outside support

Although friends and family are a great source of support, sometimes professional care and advice is needed. Refer to the list of resources on this page or call the EAP for more information.

If you think you or a loved one may be depressed, contact the EAP or consult with a qualified health care provider. Your EAP is also available to answer questions and can provide helpful depression resources. Call any time, day or night, to speak with a licensed counselor.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees and their family members at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

800-222-0364

TTY: 888-262-7848

foh4you.com

Depression Resources

**Anxiety and Depression
Association of America**

ADAA.org

**Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance**

DBSAAlliance.org

Mental Health America

MentalHealthAmerica.net

**National Institute of Mental
Health**

nimh.NIH.gov

**Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services
Administration**

SAMHSA.gov