



Learn About Depression



We all feel sad or low sometimes. It is a natural human emotion to feel down when life gets hard. These feelings usually pass over time. However, some people experience these feelings intensely for weeks, months, or even years. Often the reason is not apparent. This is called depression.

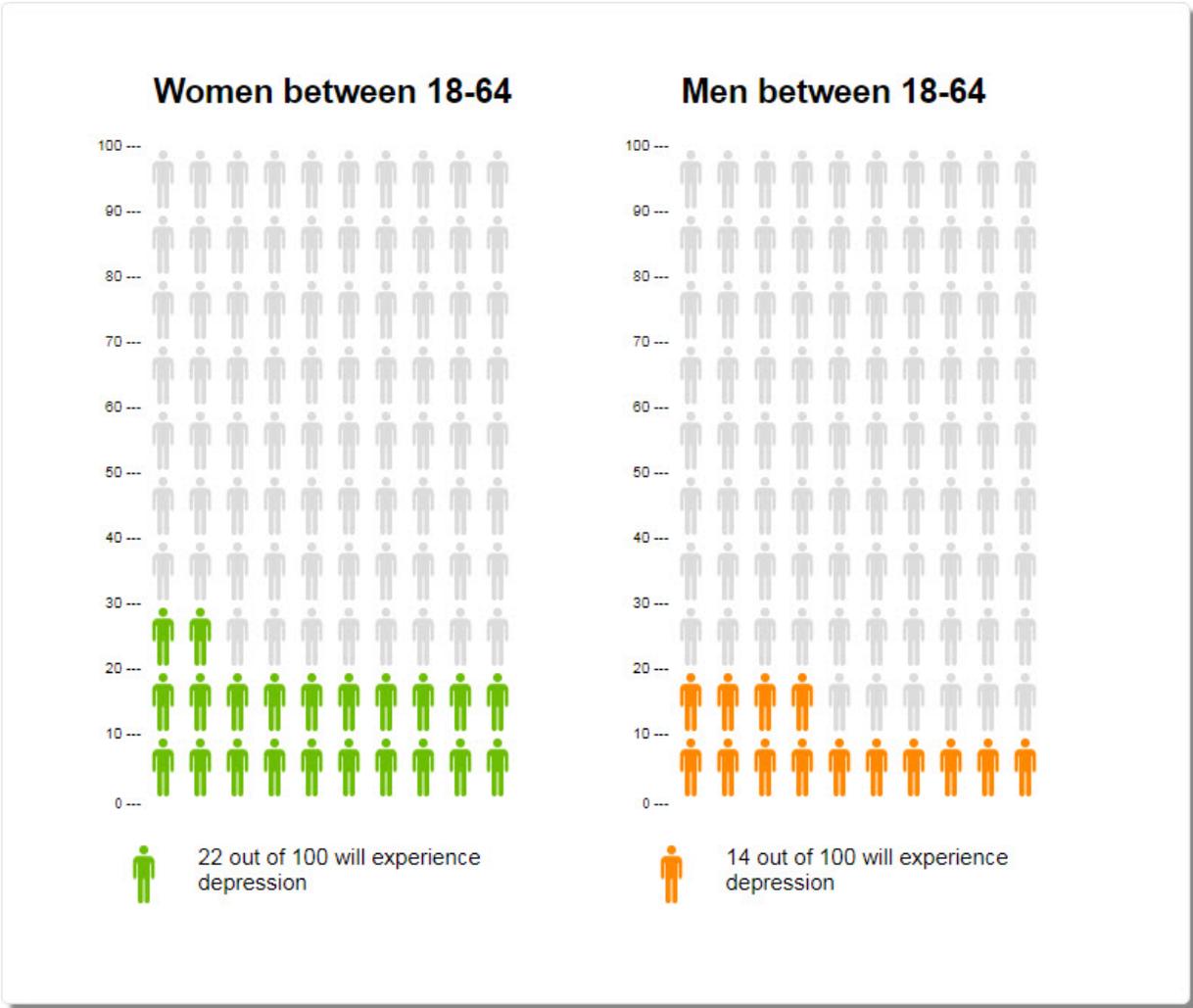
Depression is a serious mood disorder that affects how you feel, think, and manage daily activities. Depression is an illness in the same way that cancer, diabetes, and heart disease are illnesses.

Some facts about depression:

Depression does not discriminate. Men and women of every age, race, ethnicity, educational level, and social and economic background suffer from depression. The problems that result from depression often get even worse because most people with depression are never diagnosed, let alone treated.

There are ways you can feel better. When depression is identified and treated, its symptoms are manageable and there are many effective strategies for living with the disease. Depression and bipolar disorder are both treated most effectively in their earliest stages when symptoms are less severe.

You are not alone. The World Health Organization characterizes depression as one of the most disabling disorders in the world, affecting roughly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men at some point in their lifetime. In the U.S., it is estimated that 22 out of 100 (22%) of women and 14 out of 100 (14%) of men between the ages of 18-64 will experience depression at some point in their lifetime.



What are the different types of depression?

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) (clinical depression)

MDD is a mood disorder characterized by low mood and/or loss of interest and pleasure in activities. Depression is classified as “major” if someone experiences at least 5 symptoms of depression that interfere with daily life and functioning over a period of 2 weeks.

Persistent Depressive Disorder (PDD) (also called Dysthymia)

PDD is a milder form of depression that lasts for at least 2 years. The symptoms of dysthymia are similar to those of major depression but are less severe and longer-lasting.

Melancholic depression

Melancholic depression is a severe form of depression that is characterized by a complete loss of pleasure in all or almost everything, despair, and emptiness. Someone with this form of depression may experience extreme slowness of movement or irregular movement. The depression is regularly worse in the morning and is accompanied by lack of appetite and weight loss.

Perinatal depression

Perinatal depression is major depression that occurs during pregnancy or within a year after delivery (postpartum depression). Women frequently experience mild mood changes during or after pregnancy, but if these symptoms become severe, they may require treatment. Symptoms include extreme sadness, anxiety, exhaustion, and difficulty bonding with the baby, making it difficult for women to complete daily care activities for themselves and/or for their babies.

Psychotic depression

Psychotic depression occurs when a person with a depressive disorder loses touch with reality and experiences some kind of psychosis, such as having disturbing false beliefs that are not shared by others (delusions) or seeing or hearing upsetting things that are not really there (hallucinations).

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

SAD is depression that takes place during the fall and winter months, when there is less natural sunlight. SAD generally lifts during spring and summer and

returns every year. It is characterized by social withdrawal, increased sleep, weight gain, and hopelessness.

Treatment-resistant depression (TRD)

TRD is a term used to describe cases of depression that do not respond well to treatment. Treatment may not help much, or symptoms may improve but keep coming back. TRD may require various treatments to identify what helps.

Doctors are now recognizing that a significant percentage of people struggling with depression have TRD. As awareness of TRD has increased, so have the new approaches to address this condition.

Situational Depression

Situational depression is a short-term form of depression that can occur following stressful life events, including divorce, retirement, loss of a job and the death of a relative or close friend.

How is Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) diagnosed?

When diagnosing MDD, doctors must rely on a careful analysis of symptoms over time. Doctors use the following criteria from the American Psychiatric Association's guidelines to make a formal diagnosis:

Depressed mood or a loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities for more than 2 weeks.

- Mood represents a change from the person's norm
- Impaired function: social, occupational, educational
- At least 5 of these 9 symptoms are present nearly every day:
 1. Depressed mood or irritable most of the day, nearly every day
 2. Decreased interest or pleasure in most activities, most of each day
 3. Significant weight change or change in appetite
 4. Change in sleep

5. Change in activity level
6. Fatigue or loss of energy
7. Guilt/worthlessness: Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt
8. Concentration: Difficulty concentrating or thinking
9. Suicidality: Thoughts of death or suicide, or has suicide plan

For more information:

- University of Michigan Depression Center
- 1-800-475-MICH or 734-936-4400
- <http://www.depressioncenter.org/toolkit>

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