

## Don't Ignore The Signs Of Depression

from the American Counseling Association

It's only recently that most people have begun to accept that "depression" can be a serious health issue which can affect virtually anyone. Depression is an illness that can be costly and have serious consequences for sufferers. It can affect the course of common chronic conditions, such as arthritis, asthma, cancer, diabetes and obesity, while also often resulting in increased absenteeism from work, decreased productivity and short-term disability.

Yet while depression is a serious mental health issue, the good news is that it's a condition with clear symptoms and can be treated. More importantly, when not treated it can worsen and even become life-threatening.

The symptoms of depression can take a variety of forms, but the most common ones include:

- changes in sleep or eating patterns
- strong feelings of sadness, guilt, hopelessness, or worthlessness
- loss of interest in or the ability to enjoy activities you normally find fun, such as hobbies, favorite sports, time with loved ones, and sex
- trouble concentrating or making decisions
- general lack of energy for no real reason
- frequent negative thoughts, such as "I'm no good," "I can't do anything right," or "My family would be better off without me"
- thoughts of death or suicide.

Simply having one or more of these symptoms doesn't mean you are suffering from depression. We all have periods when we feel a little low and things aren't going quite right. But if you're experiencing more than one of these symptoms over a period of two weeks or more, it's a good sign there may be a problem that needs professional treatment.

This isn't always an easy decision to reach. Many people facing depression tend to feel that the problem is unique to them and that others simply wouldn't understand. That's far from the truth, of course. Each year, about 9.5 million Americans struggle with depression.

While most of us would think it foolish to ignore a severe, ongoing physical pain, many people find it acceptable to ignore or overlook the symptoms of depression. Instead, if you suspect depression might be affecting your life, talk to someone. You might start with someone close to you, but don't hesitate to seek professional help. A professional counselor can provide a variety of help for overcoming depression and returning to a happier and more productive life. Go to [www.counseling.org/learn-about-counseling/what-is-counseling/find-a-counselor](http://www.counseling.org/learn-about-counseling/what-is-counseling/find-a-counselor) to locate a counselor in your area.

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