

Never ignore depression

June 7 2018, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Studies show that depression is underreported. People aren't getting the help they need, sometimes because they don't know the warning signs or where to turn, or are embarrassed because of the stigma

that can still surround mental health issues.

But the numbers are too great to ignore. Up to 26 percent of U.S. women and up to 12 percent of men will experience [major depression](#) at some point in their lives. In any given year, that's 16 million American adults.

As many as one in 33 children and one in eight teens also struggle with depression—that's 9 percent of kids aged 12 to 17 in any given year. And new research suggests these numbers may be even higher.

It's important to recognize signs of depression in yourself or a loved one, including a child, and to get help from a doctor.

Signs of depression:

- Persistent sadness, anxiety or an "empty" feeling
- Hopelessness, guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest in hobbies and favorite activities
- A lack of energy and persistent fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early morning awakening or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Restlessness or irritability
- Physical symptoms including pain
- Thoughts of death or contemplating suicide

Take immediate action if you or a loved one is having [suicidal thoughts](#). If you're thinking of harming yourself or attempting suicide:

- Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.
- Call the toll-free 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.
- Ask a family member or friend to help you make these calls or

take you to the hospital.

The stigma around depression exists, in part, because it's poorly understood. However, one study found that once people are educated about it—that it's an illness and not something those affected bring on themselves—they are more likely to change their thinking and accept that depression can and should be treated.

Family members of someone going through [depression](#) should become educated about the disease because they make up an important part of the depressed person's support network and can help prevent a recurrence.

More information: The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance has detailed information on [depression](#) and who is at the greatest risk.

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Citation: Never ignore depression (2018, June 7) retrieved 21 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-06-depression.html>

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