

DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER



SA Federation for
Mental Health

What it is:

Major depressive disorder is characterised by a pervasive and persistent low mood that is accompanied by low self-esteem and by a loss of interest or pleasure in normally enjoyable activities. It is also accompanied by a number of physical and mental changes that have a negative effect on an individual's functionality. However, the disorder can manifest differently in various age and gender groups. The feelings most commonly associated with depression are sadness and hopelessness. However, in children and adolescents the predominant mood may be irritable rather than sad.

In some adults, especially males, the predominant feelings expressed may also be of increased anger, irritability and frustration. Some individuals talk about feeling empty or emotionless rather than sad and tearful. Regardless of the emotional symptoms expressed, the overriding commonality is that the symptoms impair an individual's ability to function at work, school or at home.

Common Symptoms:

1. Feeling sad, empty or hopeless
2. Constant irritated or agitated mood
3. Loss of interest and pleasure in activities and hobbies
4. Significant weight loss or gain in a short period of time
5. Sleeping too much or too little
6. Fatigue or loss of energy
7. Feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
8. Diminished ability to concentrate
9. Social withdrawal
10. Reduced sex drive
11. Frequent thoughts of death or dying, may involve suicidal talk or behaviour

Remember to always consult a mental health or medical practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.

This factsheet is based on information obtained from the DSM-5:
American Psychiatric Association, 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.*



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Causes:

Researchers believe that temperament may play a role in the development of major depressive disorder, as negative affectivity is a well-established risk factor for the onset of the disorder, especially if the individual experiences stressful life events. Environmental factors like adverse childhood experiences and stressful life events could also be triggers on their own. There is also a genetic and physiological component as first degree relatives of someone with major depressive disorder are two to four times more likely to develop the disorder.

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