

# Major Depressive Disorder, Adult



## Behavioral Health Program

### Contact a Health Care Provider If:

- You feel suicidal and are making a plan to commit suicide.
- You are drinking or using drugs to stop the pain from your depression.
- You are cutting yourself or thinking about cutting yourself.
- You are thinking about hurting others and are making a plan to do so.
- You believe the world would be better off without you in it.
- You are isolating yourself completely and not talking with anyone.
- You stop having the urge to eat and/or drink
- You begin to see or hear things that are not present

### Crisis Resources:

You can go to your nearest emergency department or call:

- Delaware statewide crisis line 1-800-577-2484
- National suicide crisis helpline 1-800-273-8255
- Your local emergency services 911

### Crisis Centers:

You can go to any of these crisis centers open 24 hours, 7 days a week

#### New Castle County

Mobile Crisis Center  
14 Central Ave  
New Castle, DE 19702  
302-577-2484

Recovery Response Center  
659 E. Chestnut Hill Rd  
Newark, DE 19713  
302-318-6070

Rockford Center  
100 Rockford Drive  
Newark, DE 19713  
302-996-5480

Meadowwood Behavioral Health  
575 South Dupont HWY  
New Castle, DE 19702  
302-213-3568

## **Kent and Sussex County**

Recovery Response Center  
700 Main Street  
Ellendale, DE 19941  
1-800-435-6785

Dover Behavioral Health  
725 Horsepond Road  
Dover, DE 19901  
302-741-0140

Sun Behavioral Health  
21655 Biden Ave  
Georgetown, DE 19947  
302-604-5600

### **What Is Major Depressive Disorder?**

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is a mental health condition. It may also be called clinical depression or unipolar depression. MDD usually causes feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or helplessness. MDD can also cause physical symptoms. It can interfere with work, school, relationships, and other everyday activities. MDD may be mild, moderate, or severe. It may occur once (*single episode major depressive disorder*) or it may occur multiple times (*recurrent major depressive disorder*).

### **What are the causes?**

The exact cause of this condition is not known. MDD is most likely caused by a combination of things, which may include:

- Genetic factors. These are traits that are passed along from parent to child.
- Individual factors. Environment, thought processes, learned behaviors.
- Physical factors, such as:
  - Body handles stress and events differently than others.
  - Long-term (*chronic*) medical or psychiatric illnesses.
- Social factors. Traumatic experiences or major life changes may play a role in the development of MDD.

### **What increases the risk?**

This condition is more likely to develop in women. The following factors may also make you more likely to develop MDD:

- A family history of depression.
- Troubled family relationships.
- Abnormally low levels of certain brain chemicals.
- Traumatic events in childhood, especially abuse or the loss of a parent.
- Being under a lot of stress, or long-term stress, especially from upsetting life experiences or losses.
- A history of:
  - Chronic physical illness.
  - Other mental health disorders.
  - Substance abuse.

- Poor living conditions.
- Experiencing social exclusion or discrimination on a regular basis.

## **What are the signs or symptoms?**

The main symptoms of MDD typically include:

- Constant depressed or irritable mood.
- Loss of interest in things and activities.
- Unexplained weight change.
- Fatigue or low energy.
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt.
- Difficulty thinking clearly or making decisions.
- Thoughts of suicide or of harming others.
- Physical agitation or weakness.
- Isolation.

Severe cases of MDD may also occur with other symptoms, such as:

- Delusions or hallucinations, in which you imagine things that are not real (*psychotic depression*).
- Low-level depression that lasts at least a year (*chronic depression* or *persistent depressive disorder*).
- Extreme sadness and hopelessness (*melancholic depression*).
- Trouble speaking and moving (*catatonic depression*).

## **How is this diagnosed?**

This condition may be diagnosed based on:

- Your symptoms.
- Your medical history, including your mental health history. This may involve tests to evaluate your mental health. You may be asked questions about your lifestyle, including any drug and alcohol use, and how long you have had symptoms of MDD.
- A physical exam.
- Blood tests to rule out other conditions.

You must have a depressed mood and at least four other MDD symptoms most of the day, nearly every day in the same 2-week timeframe before your health care provider can confirm a diagnosis of MDD.

## **How is this treated?**

This condition is usually treated by mental health professionals, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and clinical social workers. You may need more than one type of treatment. Treatment may include:



- Psychotherapy. This is also called talk therapy or counseling. Some examples of psychotherapy include:
  - Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). This type of therapy teaches you to recognize unhealthy feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and replace them with positive thoughts and actions.
  - Interpersonal therapy (IPT). This helps you to improve the way you relate to and communicate with others.
  - Family therapy. This treatment includes members of your family.
- Medicine to treat anxiety and depression, or to help you control certain emotions and behaviors.
- Lifestyle changes, such as:
  - Limiting alcohol and drug use.
  - Exercising regularly.
  - Getting plenty of sleep.
  - Making healthy eating choices.
  - Spending more time outdoors.

Treatments involving stimulation of the brain can be used in situations with extremely severe symptoms, or when medicine or other therapies do not work over time. These treatments include electroconvulsive therapy, transcranial magnetic stimulation, and vagal nerve stimulation.

## **Follow these instructions at home:**

### **Activity**

- Return to your normal activities as told by your health care provider.
- Exercise regularly and spend time outdoors as told by your health care provider.

### **General instructions**

- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your health care provider.
- **Do not** drink alcohol. If you drink alcohol, limit your alcohol intake to no more than 1 drink a day for nonpregnant women and 2 drinks a day for men. One drink equals 12 oz of beer, 5 oz of wine, or 1½ oz of hard liquor. Alcohol can affect any antidepressant medicines you are taking. Talk to your health care provider about your alcohol use.
- Eat a healthy diet and get plenty of sleep.
- Find activities that you enjoy doing, and make time to do them.
- Consider joining a support group. Your health care provider may be able to recommend a support group.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your health care provider. This is important.

## **Where to find more information:**

**National Alliance on Mental Illness**

- [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

**U.S. National Institute of Mental Health**

- [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

- 1-800-273-TALK (8255). This is free, 24-hour help.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

Document Released: 04/14/2014 Document Revised: 08/24/2017 Document Reviewed: 06/28/2017  
Elsevier Interactive Patient Education © 2018 Elsevier Inc.