

Self Assessment Checklists

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If you see yourself in these lists, show them to your doctor for assessment and treatment.

Symptoms of Depression

Depression has a very wide variety of symptoms and each individual shows a different pattern.

Generally speaking, a person usually has been sad for prolonged periods without obvious cause. The onset of depressive symptoms is usually very slow and insidious so a person doesn't realize that they are slowly sliding into depression. They just gradually adjust to an ever-worsening mood and assume that they are reacting normally to life's circumstances. Depression often begins in the teen years and lasts for so long that the symptoms become "normal" to you.

You may be suffering from Depression if you have gradually begun to slip into these symptoms and you suffer from many of them most of the time, on most days for months or years.

- You have persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" moods.
- You suffer from feelings of hopelessness, pessimism and low self-esteem.
- You feel guilty and worthless.
- You have lost interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that you once enjoyed, including sex.
- Your sleep patterns are disrupted. You have insomnia, wake early in the morning, or have been oversleeping.
- Your eating habits have changed. You have a loss of appetite or have started overeating. You've noticed a weight loss or weight gain.
- You seem to have decreased energy, feelings of fatigue, a "slowed down" feeling, or agitation that you can't control.
- Simple tasks seem harder and you've started procrastinating.
- You've had constant feelings of "life isn't worth living like this," thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts.
- You feel restless, irritable, bad tempered, rarely relaxed or content.
- You've had difficulty concentrating, remembering and making decisions. Your mind is hindered by a persistent, uncontrollable cluttering of down, sad, negative thoughts that you can't keep out.
- You have had persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain.
- You suffer from continuous anxiety that can't be turned off. You worry uncontrollably about small things (such as your physical health).

- You are having difficulty making small talk and have started to isolate yourself socially or have withdrawn from your peers.
- Your family has a history of depression, alcoholism or nervous breakdowns.
- In children, you should look for increased irritability, persistent complaints of physical problems, agitation, unwarranted anxiety, panic, or social withdrawal.

Symptoms of Anxiety

Do you have excessive or unrealistic anxiety and worry about a number of events or activities? Has it been noticeable on most days for at least 6 months? Is it difficult to control or turn off the worry?

- Does the worry or anxiety cause significant distress (i.e., it bothers you that you worry too much) or significant interference with your day-to-day life? For example, the worry may make it difficult for you to perform important tasks at work, interfere with relationships, or get in the way of sleep.
- Do you experience feelings of anxiety, fear, or panic immediately upon encountering a feared social situation?
- Does fear of embarrassment cause you to avoid doing things or speaking to people?
- Do you tend to avoid a feared social situation, or if you can't avoid it, the situation is endured with intense anxiety or discomfort?
- Do you recognize that the fear is excessive, unreasonable, or out of proportion to the actual risk in the situation?
- Do you have sudden attacks of intense fear or discomfort that are unexpected or out of the blue?
- Have you ever had one of these attacks and spent the next month or more living in fear of having another attack or worrying about the consequences of the attack?

Symptoms of elevated Mood Swings

Do you have recurring episodes lasting hours or days with these characteristics?

- You feel an exaggerated elation, or have rapid, unpredictable mood swings.
- You get irritable or impatient when people can't keep up with you.
- You have an abnormal sleeping pattern. You haven't been able to sleep, you are too busy to sleep, you feel you don't need to sleep, and you don't feel tired the next day.
- You make big (unachievable) plans, have an inflated self-esteem, or have an exaggerated sense of your own importance.
- You are an impulsive spender.
- You can't control how much, how loud, or how fast you speak. People are having a hard time keeping up with you in conversation.

- Your thoughts are racing and jumbled, they jump from topic to topic.
- You have poor concentration and are easily distracted.
- You've been acting out of character, feel uninhibited, have an increased sexual drive, or have been behaving promiscuously.
- You behave like you can't be stopped, and have increased energy.
- Your driving is erratic and aggressive.
- You refuse treatment, blame others for your symptoms, have been using poor judgment, or show a lack of insight in your decision making.
- You've been acting inappropriately in social situations. You tell people off, misinterpret events and overreact, distort the meaning of ordinary remarks, or act out other high-risk behaviors.

These behaviors can last hours, days or weeks and normally end with a crash into profound depression.

What to do next

If you see yourself described in the symptom checklists, then you need to see your doctor, show him the lists and tell him how you're feeling. He will know if you need medications to correct the imbalance and get back your thought control. Counsellors are also very helpful to put your thinking on the right track.