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# What Can Cause Depression?

Depression is a real, treatable illness. Certain things can set it off. Below are some common causes. Any of these things, or more than one of them, can make depression more likely. Sometimes depression occurs for no one clear reason. But no matter what the cause, depression is a serious illness that can be treated.

## Loss or stress

Depression can occur in children and adults. But it often starts in adulthood. Normal grief over a death, breakup, or other loss may become depression. Life stresses, such as abuse, job loss, or a sudden change in finances, can also set off depression. In some cases, years can go by before it sets in.

## Family history

Depression seems to run in families. If one or more of your close relatives (parents, grandparents, or siblings) have had an episode of depression, you may be more likely to have the illness, too.

## Drugs and alcohol

Both drugs and alcohol can upset the chemical balance in the brain. This can lead to an episode of depression. Some people who have depression turn to drugs or alcohol to numb the pain. But in the long run, this just makes depression worse.

## Medicines

Depression can be a side effect of some medicines. These include medicines for high blood pressure, cancer, pain, and other health problems. So tell your doctor about how you are feeling. Tell them the role your medicines may play in your symptoms. But never stop taking one without your doctor's OK.

## Physical illness

Being sick can make anyone feel frustrated and sad. But some health problems may cause changes in your brain that lead to depression. Other health problems may be mistaken for depression. This includes an underactive thyroid.

## Hormones

Hormones carry messages in the blood. They may affect brain chemicals, leading to depression. Women may get depressed when their hormone levels change quickly. Levels change just before their period, after giving birth, and during menopause.