



DECEMBER 2020

Wellness Matters

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Stay Healthy

Your Mental Health: Depression

Everyone occasionally has bouts of sadness, but these feelings are usually temporary. When a person has a depressive disorder, it interferes with daily life. In the midst of a pandemic, depression can take over as we face isolation, worry, or anxiety.

Types of Depression There are several forms of depressive disorders, the most common being the first two listed below:

Major depressive disorder: characterized by a combination of symptoms that interfere with a person's daily life. It is disabling and prevents a person from functioning normally.

Dysthymic disorder: also called dysthymia, it is long-term (two years or longer) feelings of depression that are not extreme, but still prevent a person from normal functions of daily life.

Psychotic depression: occurs in conjunction with a form of psychosis, such as delusions.

Postpartum depression: can occur within a year of giving

birth. Symptoms include sadness, lack of energy, trouble concentrating, anxiety, and feelings of guilt.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD): characterized by the onset of depression during the winter months, when there is less natural sunlight.



Symptoms People with depressive illnesses do not all experience the same symptoms. The severity, frequency, and duration will vary depending on the individual and illness. Symptoms to be aware of include:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings

- Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, and/or hopelessness
- Irritability, restlessness, fatigue, and/or insomnia
- Loss of interest in activities once found pleasurable
- Dramatic change in appetite
- Thoughts of suicide

Diagnosis and Treatment

Depression is a treatable disorder. The first step is to visit a doctor for a medical exam to rule out other factors that may be causing the condition, such as medications or a thyroid disorder.

Once diagnosed, one may be treated with psychotherapy and/or medication. In the meantime, it is important to exercise regularly, stay busy with safe activities, and think positively. Postpone major decisions, such as marriage or a career change, until better. Learn more at [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov).

Fight Obesity

The epidemic of obesity is now recognized as one of the world's most important public health problems. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 42.4 percent of U.S. adults are obese—and there were no significant differences between sex or by age group.

What is obesity? Weight that is higher than what is considered as a healthy weight for a given height is described as overweight or obese. Body mass index (BMI) is a measurement calculated from a person's height and weight (multiply weight in pounds by 703, divide by height in inches and divide again by height in inches).

- Underweight range: less than 18.5
- Normal range: 18.5 to <25
- Overweight range: 25 to <30
- Obese range: 30 or higher

It's worth noting that BMI can be used as a screening tool, but is not diagnostic of the overall health of an individual.

What causes obesity? Obesity usually results from a combination of causes and contributing risk factors:

- Unhealthy diet
- Liquid calories (e.g., alcohol and soft drinks)
- Inactivity or sedentary lifestyle
- Medication use
- Lack of sleep; stress

Obesity is a serious concern because it's associated with poorer mental health outcomes and reduced quality of life. Health risks associated with obesity include heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, sleep apnea, asthma, and some types of cancer.

How can you address obesity? There is no single or simple solution, but you can make healthy lifestyle choices to help combat obesity: exercise regularly, eat healthy, and monitor your weight regularly.



Healthy & Nutritious Baking Makeovers

Baking is often a big part of holiday traditions. Try the following tips to nutrify your favorite recipes.

Fat: For baked goods, use half the recommended butter or oil and replace the other half with unsweetened applesauce or mashed banana.

Salt: If baked goods don't require yeast, you can reduce salt by half.

Sugar: Reduce the amount of sugar by one-third to one-half. Instead, add spices like cinnamon, cloves, allspice, and nutmeg—or flavorings such as vanilla or almond extract to boost sweetness.

Healthy Sugar Substitutes

You may be surprised to find out holiday baked goods still taste good with less sugar. In addition to cutting how much sugar you add, consider these sugar substitutes:



Natural sweeteners

Use honey or maple syrup by adding in a quarter of the amount of sugar listed and adjusting to taste.



Unrefined sugars

Give cane sugar, coconut sugar or date sugar a try, using it cup for cup.



Stevia

Swap out 1 cup of sugar for 1 teaspoon of stevia. This sweet substitute works well in recipes calling for dry sweeteners.