

Fact Sheet: Depression in Adults

What is depression?

Depression is a clinical disorder involving brain dysfunctions. Depression is diagnosed according to the international classification system of disorders (ICD-11) when certain symptoms are permanently present for at least two weeks. Depression is severe, often a life-threatening disorder, it is more than a reaction to difficult life circumstances.

How common is depression?

Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders: around 20 million European citizens suffer from depression each year, with more than 300 million people affected worldwide. In general, depression can affect anyone who has a vulnerability for this disorder: people from all backgrounds, in all professions, and at all stages of life. Having suffered from a depressive episode indicates that the person has a vulnerability and therefore has a high risk to suffer from further episodes during life, even without major life adversities. The vulnerability can be inherited but also acquired by traumatization early in life.

What are the symptoms of depression?

Depression is far beyond distress or normal suffering: it is an independent illness involving signs and symptoms that will last for weeks, months, or years without appropriate treatment.

Common signs and symptoms of depression are presented below in Figure 1:

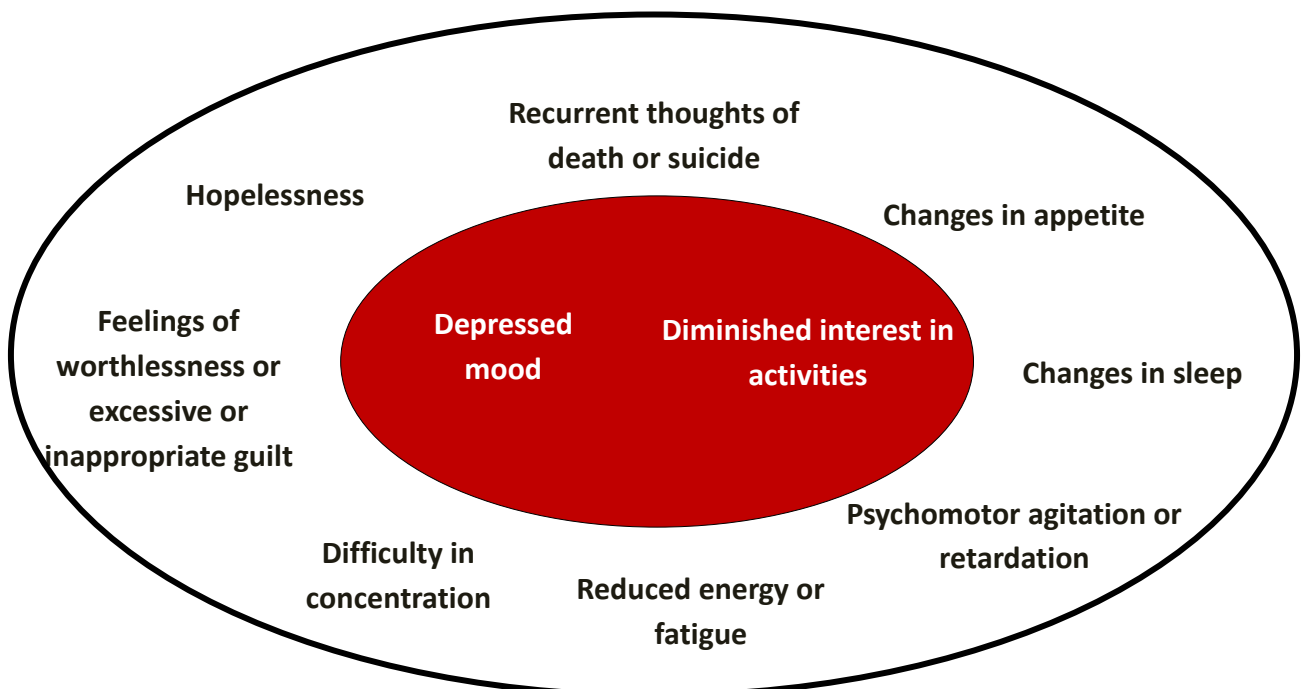


Figure 1: Core (within the red circle) and additional criteria (within the white circle) for depression according to ICD-11 was updated

For the diagnosis of a depressive episode, two criteria need to be fulfilled at the same time: at least five symptoms in total have to be present, among which one is a core symptom these symptoms have to be present most of the days, nearly every day, for at least two weeks

In severe depression, the negative thoughts can become so intense and exaggerated that they become delusional. The delusional thoughts surround topics such as being guilty, developing catastrophic somatic illnesses or falling into misery. Patients with such delusional (or psychotic) depression in nearly all cases need urgent inpatient treatment. Depression often aggravates somatic complaints. Existing complaints become unbearable, and these somatic complaints can hide the underlying depression.

In the [iFightDepression Website](#), there is a [Self-Test](#) for depression (in the box "Self-Management Resources"). To have a better understanding of your situation, you can fill in the self-test for depression.

Depression and suicide:

A substantial number of depressed people die by suicide and many more make suicide attempts. In the European Member States alone, 60,000 people die by suicide each year and among them more than half were depressed. When suicidal thoughts occur, it is highly recommended that patients and/or relatives discuss this immediately with their doctor or arrange professional help. It is important to know that this is a symptom of the illness, not a conscious wish and that a person is unlikely to continue to feel this way if they receive treatment.

Treatment of depression:

Antidepressants and psychotherapy are the two main pillars of treatment for depression. Most often used is the treatment with antidepressants (provided by psychiatrists or General Practitioners), sometimes in combination with psychotherapy (provided by psychiatrists and psychotherapists). Psychotherapy is also applied as a monotherapy, especially in milder forms of depression. Treatment is often performed as an outpatient treatment. There are other treatment options such as light therapy, electroconvulsive therapy, or Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS), some of which are offered in specialised centres.

Different types of psychotherapy exist for the treatment of depression, among which Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy (CBT) has by far the best evidence base concerning antidepressant efficacy.

You can read more about treatment on the [iFightDepression Website: Treatment for depression](#). If you think you have depression, please seek professional help.

Contact:

European Alliance Against Depression:

Email: contact@eaad.net

Website: www.eaad.net

Cork Kerry Regional Alliance Against Depression

National Suicide Research Foundation

Email: eaadbest@ucc.ie

Website: <https://eaad-best.eu/>

