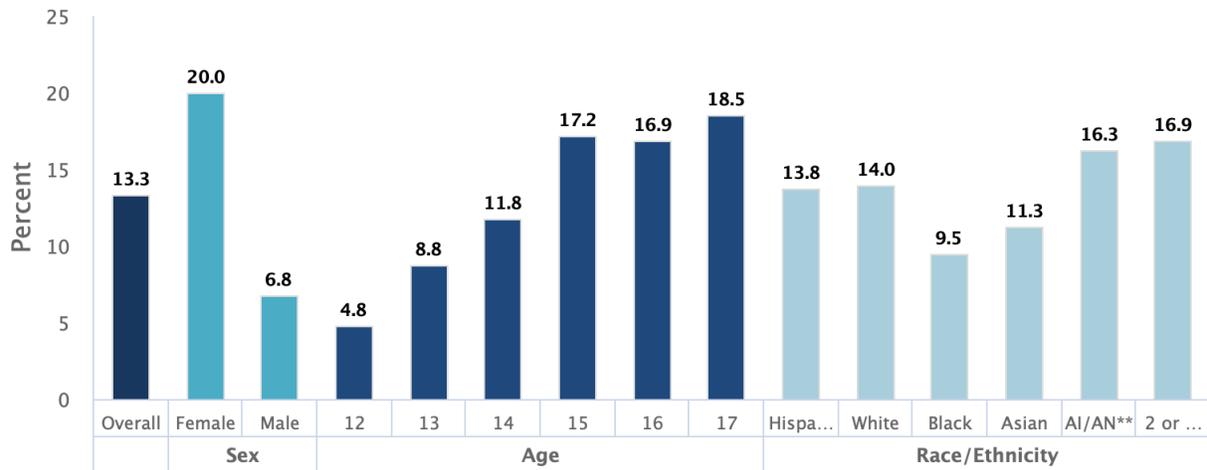


Depression

- ⇒ Depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the U.S.
- ⇒ An estimated 3.2 million adolescents aged 12 to 17 in the United States had at least one major depressive episode

Past Year Prevalence of Major Depressive Episode Among U.S. Adolescents (2017)

Data Courtesy of SAMHSA



Overview

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a medical illness that can interfere with your ability to handle your daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or managing your schoolwork.

Being a teenager can be tough. There are changes taking place in your body and brain that can affect how you learn, think, and behave. And if you are facing tough or stressful situations, it is normal to have emotional ups and downs.

But if you have been overwhelmingly sad for a long time (a few weeks to months) and you're not able to concentrate or do the things you usually enjoy; you may want to talk to a trusted adult about depression.

Why can't you just 'snap out' of depression?

Well-meaning friends or family members may try to tell someone with depression to "snap out of it," "just be positive," or "you can be happier if you just try harder." But depression is not a sign of weakness or a character flaw. **Many people with depression need treatment to get better.**

Signs and Symptoms

If you are wondering if you may have depression, ask yourself these questions:

- *Do you constantly feel sad, anxious, or even "empty," like you feel nothing?*
- *Do you feel hopeless or like everything is going wrong?*
- *Do you feel like you're worthless or helpless? Do you feel guilty about things?*
- *Do you feel irritable much of the time?*
- *Do you find yourself spending more time alone and withdrawing from friends and family?*
- *Are your grades dropping?*
- *Have you lost interest or pleasure in activities and hobbies that you used to enjoy?*
- *Have your eating or sleeping habits changed (eating or sleeping more than usual or less than usual)?*
- *Do you always feel tired? Like you have less energy than normal or no energy at all?*
- *Do you feel restless or have trouble sitting still?*
- *Do you feel like you have trouble concentrating, remembering information, or making decisions?*
- *Do you have aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or stomach problems without a clear cause?*
- *Do you ever think about dying or suicide? Have you ever tried to harm yourself?*

Not everyone who is depressed experiences every symptom. Some people experience only a few symptoms while others may experience many.

Risk Factors

Many factors increase the risk of developing or triggering teen depression, including but not limited to:

- *Having issues that negatively impact self-esteem, such as obesity, peer problems, long-term bullying or academic problems*
- *Having been the victim or witness of violence, such as physical or sexual abuse*
- *Having other mental health conditions, such as bipolar disorder, an anxiety disorder, a personality disorder, anorexia or bulimia*
- *Having a learning disability or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)*
- *Having ongoing pain or a chronic physical illness such as cancer, diabetes or asthma*
- *Struggling with sexual orientation*
- *Having certain personality traits, such as low self-esteem or being overly dependent, self-critical or pessimistic*

- *Abusing alcohol, nicotine or other drugs*

Treatment and Therapies

Depression, even the most severe cases, can be treated. The earlier that treatment can begin, the more effective it is. Depression is usually treated with medications and psychotherapy, or a combination of the two by mental health professionals.

Things You Can Do

Here are other tips that may help you or a loved one during treatment for depression:

- *Try to be active and exercise.*
- *Set realistic goals for yourself.*
- *Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative.*
- *Try not to isolate yourself, and let others help you.*
- *Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately.*
- *Postpone important decisions, such as getting married or divorced, or changing jobs until you feel better. Discuss decisions with others who know you well and have a more objective view of your situation.*
- *Continue to educate yourself about depression.*

How Do I Get Help?

If you think you might have depression, you are not alone. Depression is common, but it is also treatable. Ask for help! Here are a few steps you can take:

- **Step 1:** Try talking to a trusted adult, such as your parent or guardian, your teacher, or a school counselor. If you don't feel comfortable speaking to an adult, try talking to a friend. If you are not sure where to turn, you can use TXT 4 HELP Interactive (www.nationalsafeplace.org/txt-4-help), which allows you to text live with a mental health professional. For more ideas and a list of health hotlines, visit <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/> (search words: children and adolescents).
- **Step 2:** If you're under the age of 18, ask your parent or guardian to make an appointment with a professional counselor or your doctor for an evaluation.

What Can I Do If Someone I Know Might Have Depression?

If you think your friend might have depression, first help him or her talk to a trusted adult who can connect your friend to a health professional. You can also:

- Be supportive, patient, and encouraging, even if you don't fully understand what's going on.
- Invite your friend to activities, social events, or just to hang out.
- Remind your friend that getting help is important and that with time and treatment, he or she will feel better.

Need help getting connected to a professional? Email counseling@breakdownstl.org for assistance.

Sources:

* National Institute of Mental Health - <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

* Mayo Clinic - <https://www.mayoclinic.org>

* Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration - <https://www.samhsa.gov>