

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)

Definition: a pervasive and persistent low mood, accompanied by low self-esteem, and a loss of interest or pleasure in normally enjoyable activities for more than two weeks. Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) is a disabling condition that adversely affects a person's family, work or school life, sleeping and eating habits, and general health. Long-term substance abuse may worsen the symptoms of major depression.

Symptoms: Five or more of the following symptoms need to be present in order to diagnose Major Depressive Disorder: depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day as indicated by a subjective report or observation by others; diminished interest or pleasure in all or almost all activities most of the day; significant weight loss (when not dieting) or weight gain (5% in a month) or increase/decrease in appetite; inability to sleep or sleep too much; restlessness or purposeless activity or physical movement slows down; fatigue or loss of energy; feelings of worthlessness or excessive/inappropriate guilt; diminished ability to think/concentrate or indecisiveness; recurrent thoughts of death or suicide with or without a plan or a suicide attempt.

Causes: No one is sure what causes depression. It may be a combination of a person's genes, brain chemistry, personal experience, and psychological factors.

Treatment: Options include Talk therapy such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) or Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), and Psychodynamic psychotherapy. Other treatments options include medication (antidepressants), meditation or other brain stimulation therapies. These treatment types are often used in combination to help the client.