

Depression

Definition

Merriam Webster defines depression as:

DEPRESSION: **a:** an act of depressing or a state of being depressed as a pressing down; **b** (1): a state of feeling sad; (2): a psychoneurotic or psychotic disorder marked especially by sadness, inactivity, difficulty in thinking and concentration, a significant increase or decrease in appetite and time spent sleeping, feelings of dejection and hopelessness, and sometimes suicidal tendencies; **c** (1): a reduction in activity, amount, quality, or force (2): a lowering of vitality or functional activity.

Clinical Diagnosis

The American Psychiatric Association in the 4th edition of the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-TR) states the following criteria for **Major Depressive Episode**:

Five or more of the following symptoms have been present during the same 2-week period and represent a change from previous functioning; at least one of the symptoms is either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.

- (1) depressed mood most of the day, nearly all day, as indicated by either subjective report (e.g., feels sad or empty) or observation made by others (e.g., appears tearful).
- (2) markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day (as indicated by either subjective account or observation made by others)
- (3) significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain (e.g., a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month), or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.
- (4) insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day.
- (5) psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down).
- (6) fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day
- (7) feeling of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt (which may be delusional) nearly every day (not merely self-reproach or guilt about being sick)
- (8) diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day (either by subjective account or as observed by others).
- (9) recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.

The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Depression and Cancer

In various studies of individuals diagnosed with cancer, 25% to 35% of all cancer patients meet the criteria for a clinical diagnosis of depression.