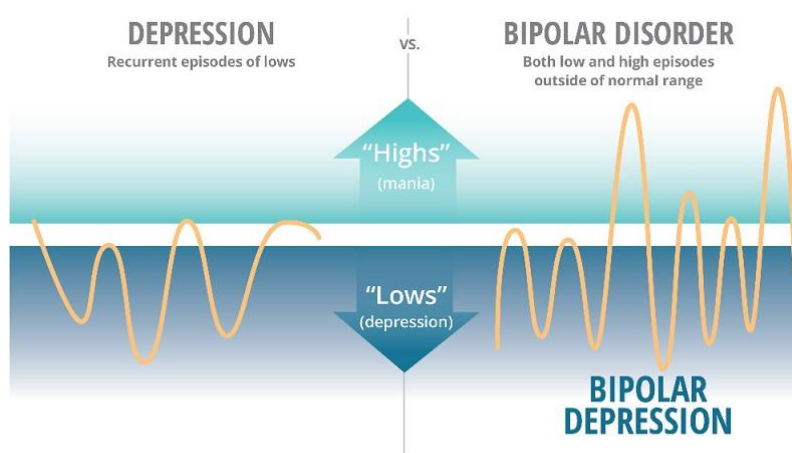


Depression – Characteristics and Diagnosis

Background

Depression is a mood disorder causing feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and at home. Typical Depression also known as **Unipolar Depression** or Major Depressive Disorder is where people experience persistent low mood, whereas **Bipolar** is where people experience periods of low mood and high feelings, often mania (was called Manic Depression).



Taken from Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc.

Depression is a relatively common disorder in the UK, with an estimated 3.5 million sufferers. The average age of onset can vary but statistics show a peak between the ages of 50 and 60, but most people experience symptoms much earlier. People who suffer from depression usually live shorter lives and can be more prone to heart disease other stress-related illnesses. Depression can exist in patients as a single episode but it is more likely to reoccur and last for several months. For some people depression occurs at one particular stage in their life and never reappears, however for others it can last a lifetime. Also women are twice more likely to be diagnosed with depression compared to males.

- ▶ Depression is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide and a major contributor to suicide and coronary heart disease
- ▶ 24% of women and 13% of men in England are diagnosed with depression in their lifetime
- ▶ Depression often co-occurs with other mental health issues
- ▶ Depression occurs in 2.1% of young people aged 5-19
- ▶ In 2017, 0.3% of 5-10 year old children met clinical criteria for depression, as did 2.7% of 11-16 year olds and 4.8% of 17-19 year olds
- ▶ Major depression is more common in females than in males
- ▶ Up to 90% of children and young people recover from depression within the first year

Taken from <https://mhfaengland.org/>



Diagnosis

Psychologists highlight symptoms which are emotional, behavioural and cognitive in nature. For example, **emotional characteristics** focus on how people experience emotion and feeling, and would include low depressed mood, feelings of worthlessness and lack of interest or pleasure in all activities.

Behavioural characteristics focus more on the actions and impact depression has on an individual's behaviour, and would include a significant reduction in their energy levels, sleep disturbance and changes in appetite.

Whereas **cognitive characteristics** relate to how people think or perceive the world when experiencing depression, for instance, sufferers of depression often have a diminished ability to concentrate, lack attention and tend to focus on the negative.

People can also suffer physical symptoms such as aches and pains and they might start to see physical changes in their body weight.

To be clinically diagnosed with depression sufferers must meet the criteria set out in the **Diagnostic Statistical Manual Version 5 (DSM-5)**.

Depression DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria

The DSM-5 outlines the following criterion to make a diagnosis of depression. The individual must be experiencing five or more symptoms during the same 2-week period and at least one of the symptoms should be either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.

1. Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day.
2. Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day.
3. Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.
4. A slowing down of thought and a reduction of physical movement (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down).
5. Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.
6. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day.
7. Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day.
8. Recurrent thoughts of death, recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.

Taken from Psycom

It is important to ensure people are diagnosed correctly using a reliable system such as DSM-5, also to make sure issues such as symptom overlap or co-morbidity are addressed. This helps people receive the right treatment, whether that is biological (such as anti-depressants) or psychological (e.g. CBT).

