



How Common is Depression?

October is National Depression Awareness Month, a reminder that depression is a medical condition that can seriously impact a person's mental and physical health. According to the [National Institute of Mental Health](#), in 2016 an estimated 16.2 million American adults had at least one major depressive episode. This number represents 6.7% of all American adults. Women are twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with depression. Depression can also affect children and teens, although the illness often goes unrecognized and untreated.

Recognizing the Signs

There are several types of depressive disorders. The severity and frequency of symptoms will vary in people depending on their unique circumstances and stage of the illness. Symptoms may include the following:

- Persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness
- Physical symptoms, such as muscle pains, headaches, stomachaches
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies
- Sleep problems: insomnia, early morning awakening, or excessive sleeping
- Changes in appetite with unusual weight gain or loss
- Irritability, restlessness, and agitation
- Withdrawal from friends and social activities
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Decreased energy and feelings of fatigue and "heaviness"
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Depression and ECT

Effective treatments for depression may include therapy, medications, or a combination of both. If medications do not reduce the symptoms of depression, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) may be worth considering. ECT is a procedure in which electrical currents are passed through the brain, triggering a brief seizure. ECT appears to cause changes in brain chemistry that can relieve symptoms of depression.

ECT has had a checkered past. However, advances over the years in how it is administered have made ECT a very effective treatment for severe depression and bipolar disorder. The procedure is done under general anesthesia and is painless.

ECT may cause some side effects, including memory loss, but usually side effects are temporary. Patients may require 6 - 12 treatments for symptom relief.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in addiction recovery services, primary care, or mental health care for children or adults, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.



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