

## Some Symptoms of Depression

- Prolonged sadness
- Mood swings
- Guilt
- Anger
- Loss of sexual desire
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Withdrawal
- Fatigue
- Listlessness
- Weakness
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor self-image
- Indecisiveness
- Sleep problems
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Isolation
- Menstrual problems
- Impotence
- Feelings of helplessness
- Apathy
- Agitation
- Delusions
- Remorse
- Weight gain
- Weight loss
- Suicidal contemplation

### Where can you get help?

- Contact your physician
- AGMD provides many resources, referrals, and much needed support. Visit our website at <http://www.agmd-gimotility.org> for more information.

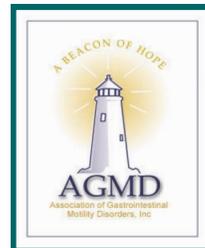
## Key Points To Remember

- Help is available
- Others share and understand what you are going through
- Depression is not a stigma
- Depression is not a sign of weakness
- You are not alone
- It's okay to ask for help

The information contained in this educational brochure should be used as a reference only. Patients are urged to contact their physician regarding any concerns or questions relating to their health or the material presented in this brochure.

The content of this brochure has been reviewed by members of the AGMD Medical and Scientific Advisory Board.

For further information concerning the Association of Gastrointestinal Motility Disorders, Inc. (AGMD) and digestive motility diseases and disorders, contact the AGMD International Corporate Headquarters.



## Depression And Chronic Illness



### Association of Gastrointestinal Motility Disorders, Inc. (AGMD)

AGMD International Corporate Headquarters  
12 Roberts Drive  
Bedford, Massachusetts 01730

Telephone: 781-275-1300

Facsimile: 781-275-1304

E-mail: [digestive.motility@gmail.com](mailto:digestive.motility@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.agmd-gimotility.org>

# Depression And Chronic Illness

## What is depression?

Depression is a serious medical condition which can affect people of all ages. Depression is not just a passing mood, but is a lingering illness that affects the mind as well as the body. It can impact every aspect of the person's life and well-being.

## What causes depression?

There are many theories about possible causes of depression. One theory suggests that the chemicals serotonin and norepinephrine play an important role in depression.

Depression can occur as a result of dealing with a chronic illness. Patients often struggle with long-term symptoms and dramatic changes to their lifestyle. When a chronically ill patient has a progressive disease, then he/she must learn to adapt to the continual changes, physically, mentally, and socially. This can be an ongoing challenging process.

## Why do so many people with chronic illness also suffer from depression?

- The person living with a chronic illness has a lot to cope with. Remember, chronic means ongoing and many patients not only have to struggle with the daily symptoms of their disease, but also the manifestation that it has on every aspect of his/her life.

- Depression can occur in this patient population as a result of learning that they will be living a lifetime of illness.
- Patients may go through a continual process of grieving and mourning the loss of a life they once had.
- Patients may have to adjust to physical changes and mobility limitations.
- Patients may have to cope with loss of independence.
- Patients may have to struggle with finances.
- Patients may suffer from guilty feelings as a result of their illness.
- Depression may result from the patient's inability to eat normally.
- Depression may result from patients coping with the unpredictable nature of their disease.
- Depression may result from the patient's inability to eat normally, anxiety over bathroom issues, social ramifications, and self-image problems
- Depression can result from a side effect of medication.
- Depression can result from mistreatment.
- Depression can result from a disease itself.
- There may be a genetic component or tendency as well.

## Why is depression often overlooked in chronic illness?

Many people assume that because a person has a chronic illness, that these feelings are normal. They can also be masked by other medical conditions.

## What are some of the possible treatments for depression?

- Professional counseling
- Antidepressant medications
- Therapy
- Support groups and networking
- Religious support
- Alternative therapies
- Yoga/meditation

## Other facts to note about chronic illness and depression:

- Depression can exacerbate already existing symptoms.
- Depressed chronically ill patients may suffer from anxiety. When this happens, there may be a magnification of how he/she perceives things. Fears and worries may escalate.
- They may have difficulty sleeping as a result of their chronic disease as well as depression. This can contribute to increased fatigue, anxiety, anger and/or sadness.
- Some patients may deny they are depressed. They may feel that it is a form of weakness, while others may feel ashamed. Still others may really not understand what is happening to them and are unaware that they are suffering from depression in addition to the chronic illness.
- Depression is a whole body disease.