

# Wellness by the Month

## National Depression Month

### What is Depression?

Depression is a complex serious illness affecting more than 17 million Americans every year. It is more than just feeling “down” or “blue”. People with depression feel overwhelmed with sadness and loneliness for no apparent reason. Depression can affect anyone although women are twice as likely as men to be affected by it. Many people experience their first episode between the ages of 25 and 44.

### What Causes Depression?

Experts agree that depression occurs when something triggers a chemical imbalance in the brain. Some of those causes may include:

- certain medications
- alcohol, nicotine or drug abuse
- lack of folic acid or vitamin B12 in the diet
- a serious medical illness
- the death of a loved one
- family history

Some of the symptoms include:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being “slowed down”
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Weight loss/reduced appetite or weight gain/ increased appetite
- Insomnia or over-sleeping
- Thoughts of death or suicide

If you think you or a loved one may be suffering from depression, contact your health care provider.

Sources: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)  
[www.webmd.com/depression](http://www.webmd.com/depression)  
[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

