



# MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM ATLANTIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH | MARCH 2022

## CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH

What better time than International Women's Month to talk about women's mental health? One very common, treatable condition that many women experience is depression.

### WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a common, serious, medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, think, and act. It can lead to various emotional and physical problems and decrease your ability to function.

Most importantly, IT CAN BE TREATED!

**Depression is NOT a sign of weakness and it is NOT a character flaw.  
You cannot just "snap out of" depression.**

Mental health challenges can look different for every person. Some common signs of depression are:

- Feelings of persistent sadness, worthlessness, guilt, and/or hopelessness
- Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Appetite changes – unintentional weight loss or gain
- Lack of sleep or oversleeping
- Increased fatigue
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, making decisions
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

*"You don't have to struggle in silence; you can be un-silent. You can live well with a mental health condition, as long as you open up to somebody about it" - Demi Lovato*



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# DID YOU KNOW?

- ♦ 1 in 8 women will develop clinical depression in their lifetime.
- ♦ Depression occurs most frequently in women aged 25 – 44.
- ♦ Women are twice as likely as men to be affected by depression.
- ♦ A CDC study showed that 1 in 10 women reported symptoms suggestive of an episode of major depression in the previous year.
- ♦ Women experience higher rates of seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and dysthymia (chronic depression) than men.
- ♦ Women have higher rates of the depressed phase of bipolar disorder than men and are three times more likely to experience rapid-cycling bipolar disorder.

According to the Women's Health Research Institute at Northwestern University, Women may be less likely than men to seek treatment after experiencing symptoms of mental illness. This is due to "internalized or self-stigma" that results from their self-image being formed by how others perceive them. Women are more prone than men to feel stigmatized for seeking assistance with a mental health issue. Women tend to rely on the opinions of the outside world for their self-esteem much more than men do. As a result, they often avoid having their mental illness treated because they want to prevent others from thinking less of them, which would cause them to think less of themselves.

## How do we build up self-esteem, have a positive self-image, and love ourselves a little more?

*Here are some tips from Dr. Ninoska Peterson, PhD, Clinical Psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic:*

1. Show some appreciation! Refocus your self-talk. Don't nit-pick your body but appreciate all the things it does for you.
2. Record the positives! Write down 5 things you love about your personality.
3. Create little reminders! Sticky notes with positive affirmations you will see in different places throughout the day.
4. Commit to feel-good things. Don't cancel those plans, volunteer or help someone, go for a walk.
5. Occupy your mind. Focus on the people, places, and things you love. Read a good book, find a hobby that utilizes your time.
6. Don't fear the mirror. Avoidance breeds avoidance – use all the tips here to help look at yourself in a positive loving way.
7. Stop comparing! This can deplete self-esteem. Objectively compliment others' good qualities – it will make you both feel good!

*"You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."  
- Buddha*

# Types of Depression in Women

There are some types of depression that are unique to women and can be linked to changes in biological female hormone levels.

## Perinatal Depression

Perinatal depression is a mood disorder that can affect women during pregnancy and after childbirth. Perinatal depression includes depression that begins during pregnancy (prenatal) and depression that begins after the baby is born (postpartum). Approximately 10 – 15% of all new mothers experience postpartum depression, which most frequently occurs in the year following the birth of a child.

## Perimenopausal Depression

Depression that arises during the time leading up to menopause (ceasing of menstruation). More than 50% of women believe it is “normal” to be depressed during this stage and that treatment is not necessary.

## Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

Premenstrual Syndrome is a combination of symptoms that occur between ovulation and menstruation. These include bloating, headaches, tender breasts, fatigue, irritability, and food cravings. About 20 – 40% of women who menstruate experience PMS.

## Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder is a more serious form of PMS. In addition to experiencing PMS, PMDD causes extreme anxiety or panic attacks, depression, suicidal thoughts, difficulty concentrating, binge eating, and insomnia. About 10% of women who menstruate have symptoms severe enough to be classified as PMDD.

## DEPRESSION CAN BE TREATED!

Typically with medication, psychotherapy, or a combination of both, your mental health can be restored to balance. The National Institute on Mental Health recommends these tips when seeking out a therapist:

Ask about background and areas of expertise.

Talk about the types of treatment offered, including medication.

Find out how long treatment should last, how progress is evaluated, and when you can expect to start feeling better.

Don't be afraid to keep looking – trust and comfort are essential for healing.

**Mental health is critical to our overall health and well-being. Talk to your doctor if you think you might be suffering from depression.**

If you feel you or someone in your household may harm themselves or someone else:  
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). The Online Lifeline Crisis Chat is free and confidential. You'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor in your area.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224

If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety:  
Disaster Distress Helpline call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746

If you need to find treatment or behavioral health providers in your area:  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment>

Mental Health Resources:  
[cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping](http://cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping)  
APA.org (American Psychological Association)  
NAMI.org (National Alliance on Mental Illness)

Atlantic Behavioral Health ACCESS Center: 888-247-1400  
ABH Health Crisis Intervention Services 24/7 Hotlines:

Chilton Medical Center: 973 - 831 - 5078  
Hackettstown Medical Center: 908 - 454 - 5141  
Morristown Medical Center: 973 - 540 - 0100  
Overlook Medical Center: 908 - 522 - 3586  
Newton Medical Center: 973 - 383 - 0973



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