

Q. How can I tell if I'm depressed?

A. Pay attention to how you feel. That's the starting point to give your mood and mental health a checkup.

Sometimes Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps wanted to quit or skip practice. Winning 28 medals didn't make him feel like a success. That's when he had to take a hard look at what was going on inside his head.

"It's OK to not be OK," says Phelps. "And for me, the most important thing was just opening up and talking about [depression], asking for help."

Everybody has good days and bad days. A day or two of feeling down doesn't mean you're depressed. But if you feel down for more than two weeks, you might be suffering from depression.¹

Millions of people struggle with depression. The cause is often linked to genetics, personal problems, social isolation, or substance abuse. For some people, it's a rare setback that lasts a few weeks. For others, depression can be a long-term problem.



So how can you tell if you're depressed? You probably know something isn't right. If you don't feel like yourself, take a minute to check up on your mental health and mood. Symptoms of depression can include:

- ✓ Feelings of anxiety, sadness, or hopelessness
- ✓ Poor sleep or insomnia
- ✓ Loss of appetite or change in weight
- ✓ Low energy or fatigue
- ✓ Increase in irritability or anger
- ✓ Loss of interest in activities you enjoy
- ✓ Self-medicating with substance abuse

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- ✓ Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- ✓ Body aches, headaches, muscle cramps, or digestive problems
- ✓ Thoughts of death or suicide

If you've had one or more of these symptoms for more than two weeks, you should follow Phelps' example. Talk to your doctor or counselor to see if you are depressed.^{2,3}

If you're in a funk or feeling depressed, reach out and ask for help.

References

1. National Institute of Mental Health. (2019). *Depression*. From: <https://tinyurl.com/qe8q78h>
2. Heddaeus, D., et al. (2018). *Treatment selection and treatment initialization in guideline-based stepped and collaborative care for depression*. *PLOS One*. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y5gxojba>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). *Selected prescription drug classes used in the past 30 days, by sex and age: United States, selected years 1988–1994 through 2011–2014*. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y6kij6x2q>

