

Depression and Your Sex Life

Depression may be robbing you of life's pleasures. Learn about the toll depression can take on a person's sex life and strategies for dealing with this problem.

By [Dennis Thompson Jr.](#) Medically reviewed by [Christine Wilmsen Craig, MD](#)

Depression drains the color out of life's pleasures, robs enthusiasm, and makes everything feel bland and flat — including your sex life. About 35 to 47 percent of people [dealing with depression](#) find the mood disorder interferes with their sexuality. That percentage jumps even higher based on the intensity of the condition — more than 60 percent of patients with severe depression report sexual problems.

Why Sex and Depression Don't Mix

The old adage about how the brain is the biggest sex organ in the body is a truer statement than you might realize. The brain controls sexual drive, arousal, and sexual function through the release of hormones and nerve impulses.

Depression stems from a chemical imbalance in the brain, and that imbalance can cause interference with a person's ability to enjoy sex or perform sexually. Depression has been linked to:

A decrease in libido. A study of depressed patients showed that more than two-thirds of respondents reported a loss of interest in sex. The decrease in their libido grew worse as their depression grew more severe.

Erectile dysfunction. Depression and anxiety are leading psychological factors interfering in a man's ability to have and sustain an erection.

Inability to enjoy sex. Depression can limit or eliminate the pleasure normally drawn from sex, says David Maclsaac, PhD, a licensed psychologist in New York and New Jersey and a faculty member of the New York Institute for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology. Depressed men, he says, "feel disconnected from any sexual experience. It's a dehumanization kind of situation."

Another adage holds that the cure can be worse than the disease, and this too can be true when it comes to depression and sexuality. Antidepressants are part of the first-line treatment of the mood disorder, but one of their chief side effects can be sexual dysfunction. Decrease in libido is most often reported, but patients also have found that antidepressants can cause erectile dysfunction and inhibit sexual pleasure. Some people taking antidepressants also report a loss of sexual desire or trouble reaching orgasm.

Reconnecting With Your Sexuality

The best way to eliminate sexual problems associated with depression is to treat and cure the illness. As patients begin to feel better about themselves, they begin to see their lives improving in all sorts of way, including their love lives, Maclsaac says.

While receiving treatment, you can better cope with your sex problems if you discuss your depression and its effect on your sexuality with your doctor and your partner. It can be very difficult to open up about these sorts of problems, but if your partner understands that the issue lies with an illness and not the [relationship](#), he may be better able to [support](#) you through treatment.

If the antidepressant you take is interfering with your sexuality, your doctor can switch your prescription to another drug. There are many antidepressants on the market now, and each has different effects on different people. You and your doctor can work together to find the right [treatment for your depression](#) with the least impact on your love life.

More on Depression Treatment

[How to Challenge Negative Thinking](#) One of the hallmark symptoms of depression is negative thinking, and it can be tough to reverse this grip on your thought patterns. Try these expert tips to [practice more positive thinking](#).

[Treating Depression-Related Headaches and Pain](#) Depression and pain are closely related and can create a vicious cycle; having depression can cause physical pain, and pain can also lead to depression. Find out how to ease [ease pain and depression](#).

[Help for Seniors With Depression](#) Depression affects more than 6 million Americans age 65 and older. Although depression is common among this group, it is not a normal part of aging. Learn how to [recognize and treat depression](#)

[in seniors.](#)

[Tap Into Your Body's Depression Fighters](#) Get your feel-good chemicals going. It's as easy as having a good laugh, nibbling on chocolate, or listening to your favorite music. Discover more ways to [boost your body's mood regulators](#).

[Facing the Social Stigma of Depression](#) Are other people's misperceptions about depression holding you back? While a social stigma does exist for mental health conditions, you can help the people in your life [understand what depression is really like](#).

[Depression and Feeling Lonely](#) Whether you're by yourself or surrounded by people, you can feel lonely. And depression can make you want to isolate yourself even more. Find ways to [reconnect with others](#).

[Weight Management Tips for Depression](#) If you're struggling with your weight, consider the relationship between depression, obesity, and weight loss. Try these strategies for [maintaining a healthy weight with depression](#).

[5 Ways to Make the Most of Talk Therapy](#) To really benefit from your talk therapy sessions, you need to be an active participant in your depression care. Follow these five steps to [improve your depression therapy](#).

[Alternative Therapies: Do They Work?](#) In addition to your regular depression treatment, you may consider trying alternative approaches, such as acupuncture, spiritual healing, or dietary supplements. But [how effective are these depression therapies?](#)

[Why Am I Depressed?](#) Many people have difficulty pinpointing the cause of their depression. But there may not be a situational trigger. Find out what may be [causing your depression](#).

[What If Depression Goes Untreated?](#) When depression is properly treated it can be well managed. But it's important to follow your doctor's instructions. [Learn how depression treatment can help](#).

[Signs of a Depressive Episode](#) Subtle changes in your emotions can go unnoticed, but they may be the early signs of a recurrence of depression. Here's how to [recognize depression symptoms](#).

[Avoid a Depression Relapse](#) The risk of relapse looms over many people with diagnosed depression, but there are things you can do to lower your risk. Find out [why depression may return](#).

[Adjusting Your Treatment](#) If you're following your treatment plan and you're still not feeling better, you should discuss it with your doctor. Here's how [depression treatment can change](#).

[Coping With Setbacks](#) It's common to have good and bad days when living with depression. But don't get discouraged. Here's how to [overcome setbacks and manage feelings of depression](#).

[Creative Therapies for Depression](#) Combined with traditional treatment, drawing, music and other healing arts can help you [cope with depression and express your feelings](#).

[Depression's Effect on Appetite](#) You may have lost your appetite or started emotional eating — both symptoms of depression. Find out when to be concerned about [diet changes and depression](#).

[Depression and Sleep](#) Depression may disrupt your sleep patterns. And changes to your sleep schedule can also worsen depression. Get tips to help you get a [good night's rest](#).

[Handling Depression at Work](#) Almost 90 percent of people who have depression say that it has affected their job. Coming up with a plan can make it easier to deal with [depression at work](#).