13 Physical Symptoms of Depression That Are Often Looked Over

by KRISTEN SCHOU

The Physical Symptoms of Depression

When you first think about the symptoms of depression you might think about feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and worthlessness. However, these are all cognitive symptoms of depression.

According to Dr. Truvedi, a large percentage of clients who come in for treatment of depression exclusively present physical symptoms.

The World Health Organization did a study which included 1146 patients in 14 countries that experienced depression symptoms. Researchers found that 69 percent reported physical symptoms as a reason they reached out for help instead of psychological reasons.

Sometimes when we are experiencing depression, we focus on the emotional aspect, and we overlook the physical symptoms of depression. It is important to know the physical symptoms of depression so we can recognize the signs before they start.

What Are the Physical Symptoms of Depression?

I will discuss the 13 physical symptoms of depression that are often overlooked and lesser known.

Headaches

If you are having constant headaches that have no other medical reason, then it could be a sign of depression.

Dull or generalized headaches are often related to depression. Stress can cause a lot of tension in the body which could result in headaches. The most common places to have these headaches are in your neck, shoulders, or scalp.

Shoulder and Back Pain

Just like headaches, stress can cause tension in our bodies which can lead to pain or soreness.

The most common places that individuals experiencing depression say their pain is coming from is their neck, shoulders, or back.

This pain can also be associated with the person not taking care of their bodies properly. People who are depressed tend to exercise less resulting intenser and weaker muscles.

Chest Pain

If you are experiencing chest pain, please see a professional. Chest pain can be a symptom of a heart attack or another serious heart condition.

Once you have ruled out those illnesses, you might want to talk to your doctor about depression. Chest pain can be associated with panic attacks which are very common in people who experience depression or anxiety.

When you have a panic attack, you can feel tightness in your chest, difficulty breathing, and pain. If you are experiencing these symptoms, ask your doctor about whether it could be a mental health problem.

Fatigue

If you are feeling so tired that you don't have the energy for everyday tasks – even when you sleep a proper amount of time – it may be a sign that you have depression.

Feelings of exhaustion or fatigue are extremely common in people who have depression. No matter how much you sleep, you may still feel tired. You might be going through your day and then become incredibly drained.

People who are experiencing depression also have a tough time getting out of bed in the morning. They lay there in bed thinking about all the stresses of life and never want to leave the comfort that their covers give them.

Digestive Problems

Our brains and digestive systems are strongly connected, which is why we get stomachaches when we are having a lot of stress. Stomach problems are common in people with depression, especially in children and adolescents.

Children sometimes don't show the typical signs of depression and one of the first signs that doctors can see is digestive problems. Adults can also have a lot of stomach problems which may include:

- Bloating
- Constipation
- Irritable bowels
- Nausea

Sleeping Problems

Many people who experience depression don't sleep well. They have issues with going to sleep, staying asleep, and getting enough sleep.

Everyone has stress in their lives, and everyone has problems sleeping now and again. However, when you are experiencing sleeping problems for more than a few weeks, you might start thinking about talking to a doctor about it.

Appetite Changes

Depression can cause appetite changes in people who are suffering from depression. Some people feel less hungry when they are experiencing depression; other's cannot stop eating.

Eating disorders and depression often get diagnosed together. Eating disorders like anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating disorder are also common in people who have depression.

Weight Changes

Because people have changes in their appetite, they can also be experiencing changes in their weight.

Sudden weight changes are a common symptom of depression that a lot of people overlook. Being underweight or overweight can be a sign that someone is depressed.

Agitated or Restless

Have you noticed that you get more agitated at things that don't normally annoy you? Have you seen that things just seem to set you off more easily? This might be a sign that you are depressed.

Sleep problems or other depression symptoms can make you feel this way. Men are more likely than women to be irritable when they are depressed.

Skin Problems

Some people have reported problems with their skin when they have a depressive episode. Acne, blotchy skin, or dry skin are common skin problems that have been reported.

This could be because when you are depressed, you don't want to take care of yourself resulting in skin problems. There also could be a chemical imbalance in the body which also results in some skin irritation.

Sexual Problems

Losing interest in sex is something that is very common when someone is depressed. If you are on medications for depression, they might take away your sex drive or affect your performance.

This can be very troubling for a lot of people and cause further emotional distress. Talk to your doctor about medication options if this becomes an issue for you.

The Bottom Line...

When depression is portrayed in movies and TV shows they typically only show the emotional signs. People should be more aware of the physical signs of depression as well.

If you have any physical symptoms listed here the last few weeks that cannot be explained by another condition, talk to your doctor about whether depression can be the root. You can be able to find relief and create a treatment plan with your doctor.