

Women and Mental Illness

Primarily Depression

- Globally, more than 264 million people of all ages suffer from depression. Depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease. More women are affected by depression than men. (World Health Organization, 2020)
- Women are about twice as likely as men to develop major depression. They also have higher rates of seasonal affective disorder, depressive symptoms in bipolar disorder, and dysthymia (chronic depression). This mood disorder may also cause physical symptoms, such as fatigue, pain, and gastrointestinal problems. (Harvard Health Publishing Harvard Medical School, 2011)
- Some of the gender disparities in depression and anxiety may be due to the effects of structural gender inequality in the workforce and beyond. (Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, 2016)
- Women are nearly twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with depression. Depression can occur at any age. Some mood changes and depressed feelings occur with normal hormonal changes. But hormonal changes alone don't cause depression. Other biological factors, inherited traits, and personal life circumstances and experiences are associated with a higher risk of depression. (Mayo Clinic, 2019)
- Depression in Women:
 - Approximately 12 million women in the United States experience clinical depression each year.
 - About one in every eight women can expect to develop clinical depression during their lifetime.
 - Depression occurs most frequently in women aged 25 to 44.
 - Women experience depression at roughly twice the rate of men.
 - Girls 14-18 years of age have consistently higher rates of depression than boys in this age group.
 - Twenty to forty percent of women may experience premenstrual syndrome and an estimated 3 to 5 percent have symptoms severe enough to be classified as Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD). PMDD is diagnosed when a woman experiences severe symptoms of depression, tension, and irritability in the week prior to menstruation.

- Married people have a lower rate of depression than those living alone. However, unhappily married people have the highest rates of depression; happily married men have the lowest rates.
- Approximately 10%-15% of all new mothers get postpartum depression, which most frequently occurs within the first year after the birth of a child.
- Although men are more likely than women to die by suicide, women report attempting suicide approximately twice as often as men. An estimated 15 percent of people hospitalized for depression eventually take their own lives.
- Depression in women is misdiagnosed approximately 30 to 50 percent of the time.
- Fewer than half of the women who experience clinical depression will seek care.
- More than one-half of women believe it is “normal” for a woman to be depressed during menopause and that treatment is not necessary. More than one-half of women believe depression is a “normal part of aging.” More than one-half believe it is normal for a mother to feel depressed for at least two weeks after giving birth. More than one-half of women cited denial as a barrier to treatment while 41% of women surveyed cited embarrassment or shame as barriers to treatment. (Mental Health America)
- In 2017, there were an estimated 46.6 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States with Any Mental Illness (AMI). This number represented 18.9% of all U.S. adults. The prevalence of AMI was higher among women (22.3%) than men (15.1%). (National Institute of Mental Health, 2019)

Works Cited

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