



SOCIETY FOR
WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

Surveys of Adult U.S. Women and Doctors Gauge Perceptions About Depression Through Hormonal Transitions

The Society for Women's Health Research commissioned surveys of 1,000 U.S. women 18 and older and 500 U.S. medical doctors to gauge their perceptions about depression in women with an emphasis on depression through hormonal transitions, such as puberty, pregnancy, postpartum, perimenopause and menopause.

The survey of women was conducted through a national telephone omnibus survey, Oct. 4-14, 2007, and the results are weighted to be representative of the total population. The survey of doctors took place Oct. 11-17, 2007, through an Internet survey. Both surveys were conducted by International Communications Research (ICR) of Media, Pa.

The margin of error for the full women's survey is plus or minus 3.1 percent. It is 4.4 percent for the survey of doctors, which included family practitioners, general practitioners and internal medicine specialists. Support for the survey was provided to the Society by Novartis through an educational grant.

Highlights from the survey

Do you think it is safe for women to take medication for depression while they are pregnant?

	Women	Doctors
Yes	10.7%	68.2%
No	70.7%	31.8%
Don't know	17.8%	n/a

Related findings:

- A statistically higher portion of women 18-34 (79.8%) said "No" compared to other women.
- Substantially more African American women (90.9%) said "No" compared to 66.4% of white women.
- 76.4% of women without a college degree said "No" compared to 55.1% of women with a college degree. Women with lower incomes were also more likely to say "No."

Do you think it is safe for women to take medications for depression right after she has a baby?

	Women	Doctors
Yes	51.2%	97.0%
No	32.0%	3.0%
Don't know	15.9%	n/a

Related findings:

- 42.7% of Black women said “No” compared to 27.6% of White women.
- 40.8% of women whose household income is under \$25,000 said “No.”

Do you believe women are at risk for depression at any of these specific times of life?

	Women	Doctors
Early teen years (puberty)	46.9%	51.4%
Right after giving birth (postpartum)	72.2%	91.0%
Late 40s through early 50s (perimenopause)	47.5%	83.2%
After periods have stopped (menopause)	39.5%	77.8%
None of the above	3.3%	3.2%
Don't know	5.0%	n/a

Related findings:

- Older women, especially women 65 and older, are less likely to believe that specific life stages are vulnerable to depression.
- Women with the highest household incomes (\$50,000 and higher) and the most education (at least some college) are more likely to believe that specific life stages are vulnerable to depression.

What do you believe are the major symptoms of depression?*

	Doctors	Women
EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS (Net)	92.6%	71.5%
Not feeling well/feeling sad, crying	54.6%	22.8%
Loss of interest in friends, activities, or social life	45.5%	36.8%
(Anhedonia) Inability to experience pleasure from normally pleasurable life events	25.0%	n/a
Mood swings	17.6%	9.7%
Unable to concentrate	17.6%	1.4%
Feeling hopeless/helpless	13.6%	4.2%
Suicidal thoughts	12.6%	3.9%
Lack of motivation/giving up easily	10.6%	6.7%
Anxious/nervous/worrying	9.2%	5.0%
Feeling worthless/empty inside	8.0%	4.3%

What do you believe are the major symptoms of depression? (continued)

	Doctors	Women
PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS (Net)	86.4%	38.2%
Trouble sleeping/changes in sleep patterns	66.2%	17.7%
Lack of energy/fatigue	50.4%	14.9%
Changes in appetite/eating habits (weight loss/gain)	42.6%	14.1%
Pain (headaches, abdominal pain, joint pain, back pain)	7.8%	2.1%

*This was an open ended question where multiple responses were allowed. For presentation purposes, the responses have been put into two categories: emotional (top 10 listed) and physical (top four listed). The percentage for each category indicates the percentage of respondents who provided at least one answer in this category.

Related findings:

- Women (38.2%) were far less likely than doctors (86.4%) to mention a physical symptom of depression.
- Women (8.7%) were more likely than doctors (5.8%) to mention things that are better characterized as depression risk factors, rather than symptoms, such as: financial difficulties, problems with spouse/children/family, or problems with work/no job.

Do you believe women are at higher risk than men of ever having major depression?

	Women	Doctors
Yes	59.8%	84.4%
No	28.4%	15.6%
Don't know	11.7%	n/a

Related findings:

- Younger women were more likely to believe that women are at higher risk than men for major depression.
 "Yes" answers by women's age group:

18-34	65.1%
35-44	61.9%
45-54	61.2%
55-64	57.5%
65+	50.3%

Do you believe that the symptoms of depression are the same no matter when in life depression occurs?

	Women	Doctors
Yes	41.0%	35.8%
No	50.8%	64.2%
Don't know	7.9%	n/a

Related findings:

- Women 55 and older, women with household incomes under \$50,000, and women with a high school education or less are more likely to think that the symptoms of depression are the same regardless of when in life the depression occurs.