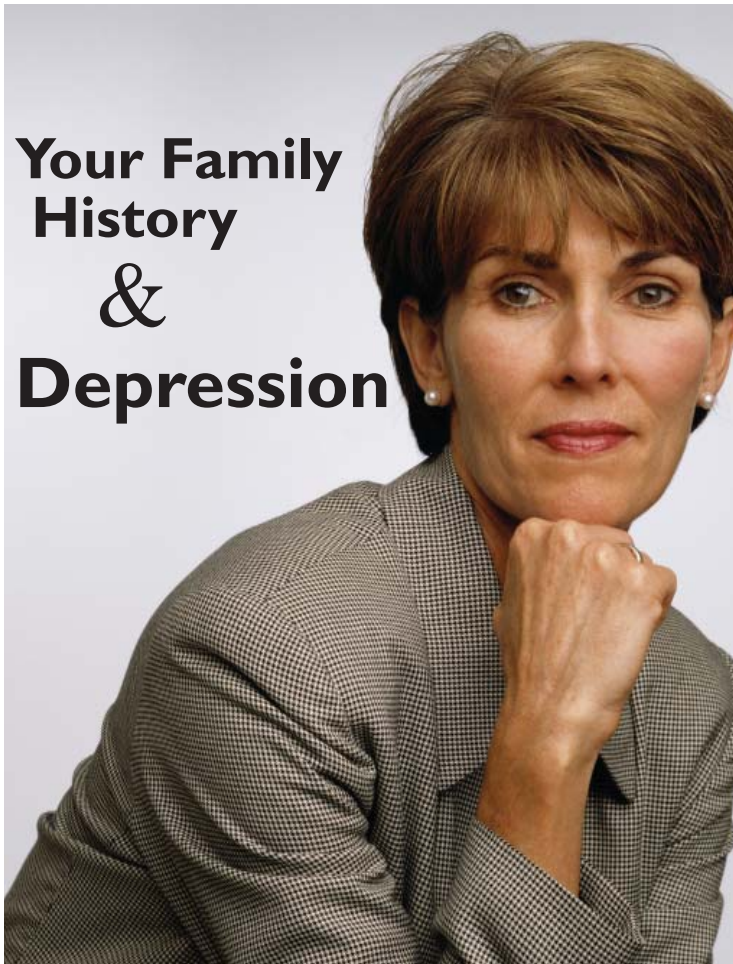


## Your Family History & Depression



**D**epression is common. In 2005, 12% of Oregonians reported that their doctor had told them they had depression.

A depressive disorder is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts. It affects the way a person eats, sleeps, the way one feels about oneself, and the way one thinks about things. A depressive disorder is not the same as a passing blue mood.\*

Some types of depression run in families. Children or siblings of individuals with major depression are more likely to develop it themselves. If you know of a family member who has had depressive disorder, then you may want to write down your family health history.

### *What is a Family Health History?*

**L**ike depression, many health problems run in families. Families share their habits, environments, and lifestyles, as well as their genes.

A “Family Health History” is a record of you and your close family’s health. By taking your family health history and sharing it with your doctor, you can learn what health problems you may be at higher risk for and how to prevent or reduce your chances of developing depression.

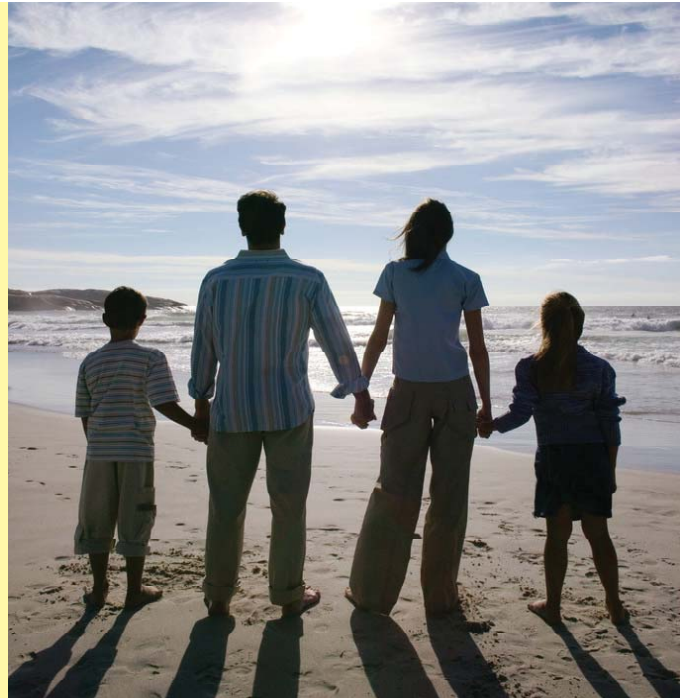
### *What can you do if you think you have a family history of depression?*

- » Use the Surgeon General’s family history tools: My Family Health Portrait can be found at <http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/>
- » The next time you go to your doctor, **take your family history with you and share it with your doctor.**
- » Take action to reduce other things that put you at risk for getting depression.



*Besides family history, here are some other things that may put you at risk for depression:*

- Being older
- Being a woman: women experience depression about twice as often as men
- Having an illness such as stroke, heart disease, cancer, Parkinson's disease or hormonal disorder
- Pregnancy and menstrual cycle changes: pregnancy, post-partum depression, miscarriage, pre-menopause, and menopausal periods



*What can I do to reduce my chance of becoming depressed?*

- **Eat healthy:** A diet that is low in fat and calories and high in whole grains, vegetables and fruits can reduce your risk.
- **Get active:** Moderate activity for 30 minutes at least 5 days of the week has big benefits.
- **Stress:** Reducing stress at home, work and school will help reduce your risk.
- **Drink less alcohol** and don't use illegal drugs.
- **Talk to your health care provider** about your family history and how your doctor screens for depression.

*Where can I learn more?*

Oregon Mental Health Program

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/mentalhealth/consumers.shtml>

Oregon Genetics Program

[www.oregongenetics.org](http://www.oregongenetics.org)

National Institute of Mental Health

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

US Surgeon General Family History Website

[www.hhs.gov/familyhistory](http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory)

"This is not just knowledge for knowledge's sake. Knowing your family health history can save your life, as well as the lives of those you love." 2006 Acting Surgeon General Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H.

**Oregon  
Genetics  
Program**

[www.oregongenetics.org](http://www.oregongenetics.org)

800 Oregon St. Ste. 825  
Portland OR 97232  
971.673.0271

\* National Institute of Mental Health <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm#sup1>