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Women Twice as Likely to Suffer Depression as Men According to *Harvard Mental Health Letter*

(Boston, MA) – Worldwide, almost twice as many women as men are dealing with depression, according to the May issue of the *Harvard Mental Health Letter*. One out of eight women will have an episode of major depression at some time in her life. Women are also more vulnerable to bipolar disorder, seasonal affective disorder, and dysthymia (low-level, long-term depression).

The *Harvard Mental Health Letter* attributes women's increased susceptibility to these factors:

- Genetics: Heredity accounts for up to 50% of the risk for depression. Researchers have identified several gene variants linked to depression that occur only in women, including one that is related to female hormone regulation.
- Women acknowledge their symptoms: Men are more reluctant to admit the problem or reach out for help.
- Stressed: Women are more likely to say they are under stress, according to a survey of over 30,000 people in 30 countries. Women, more than men, are subject to certain kinds of severe stress such as sexual abuse and domestic violence.
- Premenstrual disturbance: Between 2% and 10% of women have premenstrual dysphoric disorder, which results from high sensitivity to changing hormone levels.
- Pregnancy/postpartum: About 10%-15% of mothers become depressed during the first six months post birth, and an even higher percentage may be depressed during pregnancy.

The May *Harvard Mental Health Letter* article also discusses treatment options for women during different stages of their lives.

Harvard Mental Health Letter is available from Harvard Health Publications, the publishing division of the Harvard Medical School. You can subscribe to *Harvard Mental Health Letter* for \$59 per year at www.health.harvard.edu or by calling 1-877-649-9457 toll-free.

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