Essentially, we are all at risk for developing a depressive illness. People of all ages, races, and social class can become clinically depressed. No one is completely immune to this condition. However, it is important to know that the more common illnesses of major depression and bipolar disorder do tend to affect some groups of individuals more so than others. Some features of these groups, when associated with the development of a depressive illness, are known as "risk factors."

Please remember that no one is predestined to develop clinical depression. However, it can be very important to be aware of risk factors so that those of us who may be vulnerable can educate ourselves, be attentive to warning signs, and take steps towards recognizing and preventing this illness.

**What are the risk factors for depression? Read the list below to find out...**

- **Persistant stress** caused by a school work, relationships, job, chronic medical condition, family problems
- **Heredity**: family or personal history of mood disorders
- **The loss of a parent** at a young age
- History of **sexual abuse** or **physical abuse**
- Going through a lot of changes or transition
- Going through a pregnancy
- **Drinking alcohol** excessively

**Do you fit some of this criteria?**

**Does this sound like someone you know?**

Call the Counseling Center 402.280.2733 or visit them in Brandeis 203!

**Risk Factors For Major Depression**

**Gender**: In the United States, women are about as twice as likely as men to be diagnosed and treated for major depression. Approximately 20-25% of women and 12% of men will experience a serious depression at least once in their lifetimes. Among children, depression appears to occur in equal numbers of girls and boys. However, as girls reach adolescence, they tend to become more depressed than boys do. This gender difference continues into older age.

There are several theories as to why more women than men are diagnosed and treated for depression:

Women may be more likely than men to seek treatment. They may be more willing to accept that they have emotional symptoms of depressed mood and feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness.

Men may be less willing to acknowledge their emotional symptoms and more apt to suppress their depression through the use of alcohol or other substances. In such cases depression can be "masked," or viewed only as alcohol or drug dependency/abuse rather than as clinical depression.

Women may tend to be under more stress than men. In today's American society women often have to manage a variety of conflicting roles. They have many responsibilities and full schedules at home and work.

Women may be more prone to depression because of the possible effects of hormones. Women have frequent changes in their hormone levels, from their
DEPRESSION: ARE YOU AT RISK?

monthly menstrual cycles, to the time during and after pregnancy, to menopause. Some women develop a depressive illness around these events.

Age: While clinical depression usually occurs for the first time when a person is between the ages of 20 and 50, people over the age of 65 may be especially vulnerable.

Previous episode: If you have had major depression once before, your chances of developing it again increase. According to some estimates, approximately one-half of those who have developed depression will experience it again.

Heredity: People who have relatives who have had clinical depression have a greater chance of developing it themselves. Also, having a close relative with bipolar disorder may increase a person's chances of developing major depression.

Risk Factors For Bipolar Disorder
Bipolar disorder is diagnosed in equal numbers of men and women. It is not known for sure why major depression seems to affect more women than men while mania affects both equally. One reason may be that mania, with its very conspicuous symptoms, is much more easily recognized than depression. Depression may also go unrecognized in men.

Previous episode: If you have had major mania once before, your chances increase of developing it again. Most of those who have had an episode of mania once will have a second.

Heredity: People who have relatives who have had bipolar disorder have a greater chance of developing it themselves. Immediate relatives (parents, siblings, children) of those with bipolar disorder are 8 to 18 times more likely to develop the condition than those not related to people with bipolar disorder. Having a close relative with bipolar disorder may also increase a person's chances of developing major depression.

Source:
www.allaboutdepression.com