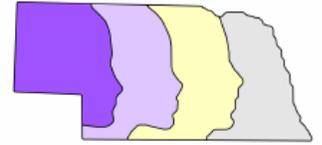


# *Depression: What You Should Know*



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*Women are more likely to be depressed than men. They suffer at nearly twice the rate of men.  
Depression is a serious medical illness that involves the body, mood and thoughts.*

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Life is full of ups and downs. But when the down times last for weeks or months at a time or keep you from living “normal”, you may be suffering from depression. Depression affects the way you eat, sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things. It is different from feeling “blue” or down for a few hours or a couple of days. It is not a condition that can be willed or wished away.

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## **What Causes Depression?**

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There is no single cause of depression. There are many reasons why a woman may become depressed:

- Hormonal factors due to menstrual cycle changes, pregnancy, postpartum period, and menopause.
- Stress- at work and home, single parenthood, caring for children, grandchildren and for aging parents.
- Family history- some studies show an increased risk for depression if others in your family are affected. Depression does occur in people with no family history.
- Medical illness such as a stroke, heart attack or cancer.

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## **What Are The Signs of Depression?**

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Not all people with depression have the same symptoms. Some people may have only a few symptoms, and others may have many. If you have one or more of the following symptoms for more than 2 weeks or months at a time, please see your healthcare provider.

- Decreased energy
- Feeling sad, anxious, empty or hopeless
- Easily annoyed, bothered or angered
- Loss of interest in hobbies and activities you once enjoyed
- Difficulty staying focused, remembering, making decisions
- Sleeplessness, early morning awakening, or oversleeping and not wanting to get up
- No desire to eat and weight loss or eating to “feel better” and weight gain
- Thoughts of hurting yourself, death or suicide
- Constant physical symptoms that do not get better with treatment such as headaches, upset stomach and pain that does not go away

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## **How Is Depression Treated?**

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Treatment for depression is different for every individual and should be discussed with their healthcare provider. Most people with depression begin to see improvements when they get treatment. Once identified, depression almost always can be treated either by therapy, medications called anti-depressants, or both. Lifestyle changes can also be beneficial in the treatment of depression.

*Diagnosis and treatment of depression should be done under the care of a healthcare professional.*

*Please see reverse*

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## Depression: The Impact of Negative Thoughts and Tips To Help Yourself Cope

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Depression can make one feel exhausted, worthless, helpless, and hopeless. Such negative thoughts and feelings make some people feel like giving up. It is important to realize that these negative views are part of the depression and typically do not accurately reflect the actual circumstances. Negative thinking fades as treatment begins to take effect. In the meantime:

- Set realistic goals in light of the depression and assume a reasonable amount of responsibility.
- Break large tasks into small ones, set some priorities, and do what you can as you can.
- Try to be with other people and to confide in someone; it is usually better than being alone and secretive.
- Participate in activities that may make you feel better.
- Mild exercise, going to a movie, a ballgame, or participating in religious, social, or other activities may help.
- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. Feeling better takes time.
- People rarely "snap out of" a depression. But they can feel a little better day-by-day.
- It is advisable to postpone important decisions until the depression has lifted. Before deciding to make a significant transition—change jobs, get married or divorced—discuss it with others who know you well and have a more objective view of your situation.
- Let your family and friends help you.
- Remember, positive thinking will replace the negative thinking that is part of the depression and will disappear as your depression responds to treatment.

*Diagnosis and treatment of depression should be done under the care of a healthcare professional.  
Information from this handout should not take the place of a visit with a healthcare provider.*

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### Additional Resources

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Nebraska Office of Women's Health	<a href="http://www.hhss.ne.gov/womenshealth">www.hhss.ne.gov/womenshealth</a>
National Women's Health Information Center	<a href="http://www.4woman.gov">www.4woman.gov</a>
National Institutes of Mental Health	<a href="http://www.nimh.nih.gov">www.nimh.nih.gov</a>

For More Information:

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