

Depression

Depression is a medical illness that involves the mind and body. It can also be called major depression, major depressive disorder and clinical depression. Depression affects how you feel, think and act. Depression can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems. You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities, and depression may make you feel as if life isn't worth living.

Depression isn't a weakness, nor is it something that you can simply "snap out" of. Depression is a chronic illness that usually requires long-term treatment. Most people with depression feel better with medication, counseling or other treatment. Women are more likely than men to experience depression.

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.

What Causes Depression?

There is no single cause of depression. There are many reasons someone may become depressed:

- Hormones- Factors due to menstrual cycle changes, pregnancy, postpartum period, and menopause
- Stress- 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 have depression - it does occur in people with no family history
- Medical illness- Stroke, heart attack or cancer

What Are The Signs of Depression?

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 please see your health care provider.

- Low 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

(more on back)

Be Active // Be Healthy

How Is Depression Treated?

Treatment for depression is different for every individual and should be discussed with her/his health care 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 health care provider.

The Impact of Negative Thoughts and Tips to Help Yourself Cope

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 wise to delay important decisions until the depression has lifted. Before deciding to make a big change — 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 over time.

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

Resources

Nebraska Office of Women’s Health
National Women’s Health Information Center
National Institutes of Mental Health

www.dhhs.ne.gov/womenshealth
www.womenshealth.gov
www.nimh.nih.gov

For More Information:

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www.dhhs.ne.gov/womenshealth and www.dhhs.ne.gov/menshealth