

Depression...

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What is Depression?

Depression is much more than just passing sadness that most of us experience from time to time. While feeling “blue” or “down in the dumps” in response to setbacks, losses and other adverse life events can be normal, one should pay attention to these feelings when they become prolonged or disabling enough to interfere with daily routine, individual functioning or relationships with others.



Some people have likened the experience of clinical depression to that of “being trapped in perpetual darkness”; others describe it as a distressing time when their minds could only conjure the most desolate thoughts. Frequently, intense, unremitting feelings of worthlessness and helplessness overwhelm the person. He/she also experiences a sense of hopelessness that these feelings will never change. On the other hand, there are others, who instead of feeling sad, experience apathy and slowing of their thoughts. Not uncommonly, anxiety is also an accompanying symptom. There is also increasing evidence that untreated depression takes a considerable toll on physical health.

Depression is not a sign of personal weakness or excessive emotion. People with a depressive illness cannot merely decide not to feel depressed and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks to months, even years.

How do you know if you are depressed?

Although depressive symptoms can vary from person to person, there are some common signs and symptoms. These include:

- Loss of interest in daily activities or inability to experience pleasure from hobbies, social activities or sex
- Inability to sleep as well, or sleeping too much
- Loss of appetite or increased hunger (with or without accompanying weight changes)
- Feeling restless, slowed down and easily tired
- Decreased ability to concentrate, finding difficulty managing tasks easily completed in the past or indecisiveness
- Increased negative, demoralizing thoughts
- Strong feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Increased irritability or easy frustration
- Thoughts that life is meaningless or not worth living
- Suicidal ideation or thoughts of self harm (Seek help immediately, without delay, if this is the case)

If you experience any of the above for more than 2 weeks, and these feelings are disrupting your usual life, you may be clinically depressed.

Treatment of Depression

Depression is a treatable condition. The majority of people suffering from depression will respond to treatment. Unknowingly, some people may turn to alcohol, mood elevating illicit substances or even potentially self-injurious thrill seeking activities in an attempt to alleviate their distress or help them "feel alive". This not only complicates the course of depression itself. At times, these "self-help" measures further result in problems in other areas of life e.g. run-ins with the law. Recognizing depressive symptoms early and seeking prompt treatment is key to minimizing the impact depression has on you, your family and work.

There are many different types of depressive illnesses. The commoner types include Major Depressive Disorder, Atypical Depression, Dysthymia and Bipolar Depression. Depression can also occur in the context of other medical and psychiatric illnesses. Each of these conditions has a characteristic presentation and unique set of symptoms. To help you manage your symptoms and get the most out of treatment, an accurate diagnosis will be necessary.

Working with your doctor, you can learn to manage depression. Apart from taking medication, he/she may also recommend that you see a therapist and/or make certain lifestyle changes as part of your treatment or the strategy for relapse prevention.

Although recovery will not happen overnight with treatment, taking the initiative to seek help will allow you start the healing process. Everyone has the right to peace within.

Regain your life by seeking treatment early.

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