

Depression

What is it? How to treat it?

The following information is from the National Institute of Mental Health, pamphlet 00-3561, developed for use by the general public, and is not intended as medical/clinical advice or treatment. If you feel that you may have symptoms of depression, you should consult your doctor or a behavioral health professional. Only your health care provider can make a diagnosis or recommend a treatment plan. For more information about your behavioral health benefits, you can call the Customer Service number on your ID card.

Depression- What is it?

Depression is an illness that can affect your body, mood, and thoughts. It affects the way how you eat, sleep, feel about yourself, or think about things. Depression is not the same as a passing blue mood. People with depression cannot simply pull themselves together and get better. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. Without treatment, a person can feel bad for weeks, months, or even years. The right treatment, however, can help most people who suffer from depression. In any given one-year period, 9.5 percent of the population, or about 18.8 million American adults, suffer from depressive illness.

The following are typical signs of depression:

- Sad, anxious, or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and things that were once enjoyed, including sex
- Low energy level, being slowed down
- Problems remembering and making decisions
- Trouble falling asleep, waking early, or oversleeping
- Overeating or not eating enough with weight gain or weight loss
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Feeling on the edge
- Symptoms that do not get better even after having seen a doctor, such as headaches, stomach problems, and pain

Help is here.

For more information about depression, you can contact these organizations and their relevant websites:

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
703.524.7600 | 800.950.NAMI | www.nami.org

National Depressive and Manic Depressive Association
312.642.0049 | 800.826.3632 | www.ndmda.org

National Foundation for Depressive Illnesses Inc.
212.268.4260 | 800.239.1265 | www.depression.org

National Institute of Mental Health Information Resources and Inquiries Branch
301.443.4513 | www.nimh.nih.gov

National Mental Health Association
703.684.7722 | 800.969.6642 | www.nmha.org

Depression- How to treat it?

The first step to getting the right treatment for depression is a physical examination by a qualified physician. A doctor's exam should include a complete history of your feelings of depression, such as: when these feelings started, how long they have lasted, how they are affecting your lifestyle, and whether you've experienced these feelings before. If you have previously experienced feelings of depression, your doctor will likely want to know if you saw a doctor at that time, and if so, what that doctor suggested and whether it helped. There are many medications that can be used to treat depression as well as counseling. Most people

find a combination of prescribed medication and regular counseling to be most beneficial. Medication can assist in helping you start to feel better faster, and counseling can help you learn better ways to cope.

Too often, patients stop taking their medicine too soon and without the guidance and supervision of their physician. Oftentimes, they begin to feel better and think they no longer need the medicine. Or they may think the medication isn't helping at all. It is important to continue taking your medications as prescribed in order to allow them enough time to work. If side effects happen before you start feeling better, talk with your doctor about how you are feeling before stopping the medication. Your doctor can help manage any side effects and may even need to change your medication. Once feeling better, it is important to continue the medication for 4 to 9 months for sustained benefits.

Possible side effects from medication:

- Headache- most of the time this will go away
- Nausea- if this happens it should not last long after taking the medication
- Sleep problems (trouble falling asleep or waking often during the night)- this might happen during the first few weeks and your doctor will be able to help you with these problems
- Nervousness- if this happens and lasts several days you should call your doctor
- Change in libido- if your feelings about sex have changed and are of concern you should talk with your doctor

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