



Health & Wellness

What is Depression?

Depression is a serious biologic disease that affects millions of people each year. The encouraging news is that it may be successfully treated. Learn how you can manage your depression by reaching out to others such as a health care professional or family and friends.



Although no single cause of depression has been identified, it appears that interaction among genetic, biochemical, environmental and psychosocial factors may play a role. The fact is, depression is not a personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away, but it can be successfully treated.

An estimated 33 to 35 million U.S. adults are likely to experience depression at some point during their lifetime. The disease affects men and women of all ages, races and economic levels. However, women are at a significantly greater risk than men to develop major depression. Studies show that episodes of depression occur twice as frequently in women as in men.

Although anyone can develop depression, some types of depression, including major depression, seem to run in families. Whether or not depression is genetic, the disorder is believed to be associated with changes to levels of chemicals in the brain such as serotonin and norepinephrine.

Symptoms

Although there is no blood test to diagnose depression, there are well-developed guidelines used by health care professionals to diagnose major depressive disorder. One of these guidelines, developed by the American Psychiatric Association, is called the DSM-IV®. Your health care provider may ask you questions based on this established diagnostic tool.

According to the DSM-IV, major depressive disorder (or “depression”) is diagnosed when five or more of the following symptoms of depression are present for most of the day, nearly every day for at least two weeks. At least one of the symptoms must be either persistent sad or “empty” feelings or loss of interest in activities.

- Constant sadness
- Irritability
- Hopelessness
- Trouble sleeping
- Low energy or fatigue
- Feeling worthless or guilty for no reason
- Significant weight change
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in favorite activities

Be sure to tell your health care professional if you’re experiencing any of these symptoms. Also, it is important to discuss your symptoms with them if they are affecting your ability to function at home or work, or with friends, family or colleagues.

Treatments

Depression can be successfully treated. There are a variety of ways to treat depression, including prescription medication and psychotherapy. Some people may use natural remedies such as herbal therapy. Only a health care professional can determine the appropriate option to treat your depression.

Prescription Medications

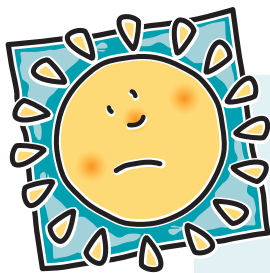
There are several types of prescription antidepressant medications that are divided into different classes. Each antidepressant class affects the levels of chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters, which are thought to be involved in regulating mood.

The most commonly prescribed prescription antidepressant classes are SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) and SNRIs (serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors). SSRIs are believed to treat depression by affecting the levels of a neurotransmitter called serotonin. SNRIs are believed to treat depression by affecting the levels of two neurotransmitters called serotonin and norepinephrine.

It's important to know that it could take as many as 6 to 8 weeks for the full therapeutic effect to occur. It is important to give the medication a chance to work and to take it exactly as directed by your health care provider.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is known as "talk therapy," which research has shown can be very helpful for people with some forms of depression. Like all treatment options, psychotherapy can be used alone or in combination with medication or other treatments.



If you or someone you love needs help, has questions or just needs someone to listen, please call Deanna in the Health & Wellness Department at 796.3400 ext. 2060 or 723.2343.

The two main types of psychotherapy that are typically used to treat depression are:

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT): Helps to reduce depression symptoms by challenging and reversing negative beliefs and attitudes.
- Interpersonal therapy (IPT): Helps facilitate the resolution of role disputes and helps to overcome problems with social skills and other interpersonal factors that may impact the development of depression.

Healthy Living

The following are some suggestions for a natural approach to a healthy lifestyle, which may help provide some relief of depression symptoms:

- Maintain proper sleep and hygiene
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Manage anxiety as advised by your doctor
- Participate in a structured and supervised exercise program as advised
- Set realistic goals for yourself
- Create small and manageable tasks
- Let those you can trust, such as family and friends, help you

Call a health care professional right away if you or your family member has any of the following symptoms, especially if they are new, worse or worry you:

- Thoughts about suicide or dying
- Attempts to commit suicide
- New or worse depression
- New or worse anxiety
- Feeling very agitated or restless
- Panic attacks
- Trouble sleeping (insomnia)
- New or worse irritability
- Acting aggressive, being angry or violent
- Acting on dangerous impulses
- An extreme increase in activity and talking (mania)
- Other unusual changes in behavior or mood