

Understanding Depression

October is Depression Awareness month. Everyone gets down in the dumps from time to time. But you may suffer from clinical depression if a feeling of sadness or loss of interest in life and friends lingers for two weeks or more. Depression can occur at any age and occurs in both men and women. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), depression can be categorized into three general forms.

- **Major depression.** In a major depression the symptoms interfere with the ability to work, study, sleep, eat, and enjoy once pleasurable activities. This is depression can be disabling and may occur only once in a lifetime, but it is common for it to occur several times.
- **Dysthymia.** This is a less severe type of depression. Its symptoms go on for a long time. The symptoms do not prevent a person from carrying on daily activities, but they do interfere with a person functioning well and feeling good.
- **Bipolar Depression.** This is also called manic-depressive illness. In this form, a person cycles through mood changes varying from severe highs to deep depressions.

This article describes the first two types listed above.

A combination of factors causes depression, according to the National Foundation for Depressive Illness Inc. Some cases are triggered by a stressful experience, such as the death of a spouse or loss of a job. Some illnesses, such as heart attack or cancer, also can cause depression, as can alcohol and drug abuse. Being vulnerable to depression may be inherited and events such as stresses at home, work, or school, cause the depression to occur. The NIMH says women experience depression about twice as often as men. Some reasons may be related to hormonal cycles—particularly menstrual cycle changes, pregnancy, miscarriage, postpartum period, pre-menopause, and menopause. Many women also face stresses such as responsibilities both at work and home, single parenthood, and caring for children and for aging parents. Although men are less likely to suffer from depression than women, the rate of suicide in men is four times that of women, though more women attempt it. .

Signs of depression

An adult who's depressed will have at least three or more of these symptoms nearly every day, all day (or much of the day), for at least two weeks (symptoms in children may be different):

- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities once enjoyed, feeling "empty".
- Feeling sad, blue, hopeless or down in the dumps.
- Fatigue and lack of energy.
- Sleep problems, including waking up early in the morning, or sleeping too much.
- Change in eating habits that result in weight loss or gain.
- Being anxious, pessimistic or worried.
- Feeling guilty, helpless or worthless.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or a suicide attempt.
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain.
- Physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain.

Symptoms in children may include: pretending to be sick, refusing to go to school, clinging to a parent, worrying that the parent may die, sulking, getting into trouble at school, being negative, grouchy, and feeling misunderstood. It may be difficult to tell if these symptoms are a temporary phase, or depression. Take your child to his or her pediatrician, if you, a teacher, or someone else who knows the child well are concerned .

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About Perspectives...

We are a private outpatient group practice offering individual, couple, family & group counseling services. Our goal is to provide clients with affordable treatment in a sensitive and understanding manner, tailoring the treatment to their individualized needs.

Our counselors have been providing services since 1981 and are committed to providing clients with the highest quality personalized treatment services possible. Experienced and caring clinicians will work with you to determine the nature of your problems and develop a treatment plan to assist you in their resolution.

For a complete listing of our office locations and a directory of our staff, please see page 2 of the newsletter. You can also visit us online at www.perspectives-counseling.com for more information.

To Contact Us:

Contact our Intake Coordinators at 866/296-5262 to set up an appointment with one of our staff.

For information you might find useful in your every day life, visit us on the web at:

www.perspectives-counseling.com.

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Understanding Depression (Con'd)

Getting help

Up to 80 percent of depressed people can be treated successfully. Most people receiving treatment for depression begin to feel better within six weeks.

Recognizing that you could be depressed is the first step toward feeling better. Once you decide to get help, see your doctor to determine if there are health or medication-related reasons for your symptoms. After an exam, your doctor may refer you to a mental-health specialist for further treatment.

The usual treatment involves an antidepressant medication. The medication changes the chemical balance in the brain, which helps improve mood, sleep, appetite and concentration. Psychotherapy or counseling also may be useful, to help you deal with major life changes, emotions, perceptions and personal problems.

If prescription medications are part of your treatment, take them as prescribed and don't stop taking them without consulting your doctor.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises health care providers, patients, families and caregivers of adults and children that they should closely monitor all patients beginning therapy with antidepressants and when doses are either increased or decreased, for worsening depression and suicidal thinking. The FDA also advises that these patients be observed for certain behaviors associated with these drugs, such as anxiety, agitation, panic attacks, insomnia, irritability, hostility, impulsivity, severe restlessness, hypomania and mania, and that physicians be particularly vigilant in patients who may have bipolar disorder.

Self-help ideas

Try these self-help steps recommended by NIMH in addition to taking medication or going to counseling:

- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately.
- Postpone important decisions until the depression has lifted
- Exercise regularly. Walking, bicycling, jogging, dancing and doing other aerobic exercise can improve your mood.
- Don't abuse substances. Alcohol and illegal drugs are closely linked to depression. Their use can contribute to or worsen your condition.
- Talk to someone. Talking with a friend or family member about events and situations that are causing you stress can help you gain perspective.
- Join a support group. Talking to people can be very useful. Many hospitals and community mental-health centers sponsor self-help support groups.

For more information, visit the National Foundation for Depressive Illness Inc. Web site at <https://www.depression.org/>.

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National Depression Screening Day

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Held annually during Mental Illness Awareness Week in October, National Depression Screening Day (NDSD) is comprised of awareness events that include an optional screening component.

National Depression Screening Day began as an effort to reach individuals across the nation with important mental health education and connect them with support services. Screening for Mental Health (SMH) pioneered National Depression Screening Day as the first, voluntary, mental health screening initiative in 1990.

Twenty-five years later, NDSD has expanded to thousands of colleges, community-based organizations, and military installations providing the program to the public each year.

Take an anonymous screening at <http://helpyourselfhelpothers.org/>