



Depression

What is depression?

Depression is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts. It affects the way an individual eats, sleeps, thinks, and feels about oneself. Depression is a medical disorder that can have a chemical or biological basis.

What causes depression?

Depression can be caused by a number of different factors. Some of the factors that may contribute to depression include:

- Heredity
- Stress
- Changes in life patterns and environment
- Illness
- Certain personality traits (e.g., low self-esteem, pessimism)
- Alcohol, nicotine, and/or drug abuse

Depression Symptoms

Not every individual will experience the same symptoms of depression. An individual may experience a few or many symptoms ranging from mild to severe. Some common symptoms include:

- Constant sad and/or anxious mood
- Loss of interest in normal daily activities or hobbies
- Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness
- Sleep disturbances
- Impaired thinking or concentration
- Weight loss or gain
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Constant physical symptoms
- Thoughts of death and/or suicide; suicide attempts
- Decreased energy and/or fatigue

Who is at risk for depression?

Depression may affect all individuals regardless of race or age. However, the following individuals are more likely to become depressed:

- Women (twice as likely as men)
- Individuals who live alone
- Elderly people
- Individuals who are divorced

What is depression?

What are the causes of depression?

What is the treatment for depression?

Depression Treatment

The first step in the treatment process should be to obtain a physical examination by a health care provider. Certain medical conditions can cause the same symptoms as depression, so it is important to rule out any underlying physical causes. Once this is done, the health care provider may refer his/her client for a psychological evaluation. The treatment choice will depend on the outcome of the evaluation. Treatment may include:

- Antidepressant medications and/or mood-stabilizing drugs
- Psychotherapy
 - Cognitive-Behavior Therapy helps an individual change his/her negative styles of thinking and behaviors associated with depression.
 - Interpersonal Therapy focuses on an individual's personal relationships that may cause and increase depression.
 - Talk Therapy helps an individual gain insight and resolve his/her problems through verbal exchange.
 - Behavior Therapy helps an individual unlearn behavioral patterns that contribute to depression and obtain satisfaction through his/her actions.
- Group Therapy (e.g., stress management, bereavement groups, marital and/or family)

Note: Many cases of depression will require medication as well as psychotherapy to produce the best outcome.

What should one do if he/she suspects depression?

If an individual suspects depression either with him/herself or with a friend or family member it is best to get help as soon as possible. There are many places that can provide treatment services or make a referral. These include:

- University affiliated programs
- Health care providers
- Community mental health providers
- State hospitals
- Churches

References

For more information, contact the University Counseling Center at (405) 325-2911 or (405) 325-2700

www.nih.gov (National Institute of Mental Health)

www.depressionalliance.org (Depression Alliance)

www.mayoclinic.com (Mayo Clinic)

www.depression.org (National Foundation for Depressive Illness, Inc.)