

Depression: A Guide to Recognition and Treatment

What Is Depression?

It is an illness. It involves a person's mood, thinking, body functions, and actions. Changes in these areas can last for weeks or months. People become upset because it can affect their ability to function.

Signs and Symptoms

Mood Changes

- Feelings of being sad, blue, "down in the dumps," or worried.
- Loss of being able to feel pleasure.
- Decreased interest with family, work, recreation and sex.

Thinking

- Negative thoughts of the past, present, and future.
- Low self-esteem.
- Feelings of being helpless and hopeless.
- Common thoughts of suicide.
- Unable to focus, remember, and make decisions.
- Anxiety and/or raised fears.
- In severe depression, false beliefs and/or unreal sights, sounds or other feelings may occur.

Physical Functions

- Appetite changes. Weight loss may result from eating less, but depressed people may eat more and gain weight.
- Too much or too little sleep.
- Chronic fatigue and decreased energy
- Nausea, constipation, or diarrhea
- Increased reports of aches and pains

Behavior Changes

Some people do not show any changes.

Others may be:

- Tearful
- Irritable
- Move slow
- Restless, pacing or hand wringing
- Not being able to work or perform daily acts like dressing, eating, or washing
- Depressed people are at a higher risk for suicide

Treatments

Depression reacts well to treatment. Treatment depends on the type, its causes, and how serious. Treatment may include talking to experts, medicines, and/or ECT (electroconvulsive therapy). It may take many weeks before symptoms start to go away. The sooner a diagnosis, the sooner treatment can begin.

Who to Call

For more information about the treatment of depression contact:

Depression Treatment at UW Health
(608) 263-6100

National Suicide Prevention line
1-800-273-8255 or 1-800-799-4889

National Alliance on Mental Illness
in Dane County

2059 Atwood Ave., Madison, WI

608-249-7188

www.namidanecounty.org

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4525.