

Depression: A Guide to Recognition and Treatment

Depression is a common medical illness. Depression involves a person's mood, thinking, body functions, and actions. Changes in these areas can last for weeks or months. Sometimes these feelings of sadness can impact your ability to function.

Signs and Symptoms

Mood Changes

- Feelings of being sad, blue, "down in the dumps," or worried.
- Trouble feeling pleasure in day-to-day activities.
- 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.
- Thoughts of death or suicide.
- Trouble with focus, memory, or decisions.
- Having 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 people with depression can also eat more and gain weight.
- Too much or too little sleep.
- Little to no energy or increased tiredness.
- Having nausea, constipation, or diarrhea.
- Increased reports of aches and pains.

Behavior Changes

Some people may not show any behavior changes with depression. Other people may be:

- Tearful
- Irritable
- Move slower than normal
- Restless, pacing or hand wringing.
- Not able to work or perform daily acts like dressing, eating, or washing

People with depression are at a much higher risk for suicide.

Treatments

Depression reacts well to many types of treatment. Treatment depends on the type of depression, the cause of depression, and how serious the depression is.

Treatments may include talking to mental health experts, taking medicine, transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and/or electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). It may take many weeks before symptoms start to improve or go away. The earlier a provider can make a diagnosis, the earlier 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 and Crisis Lifeline
Call or Text 988

Dane County 24-hour Crisis Line
(608) 280-2600

National Alliance on Mental Illness
in Dane County
6400 Gisholt Dr., Suite 203, Monona, WI
53713
(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 © 11/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4525.