

Depression

Depression: When the Blues Don't Go Away

Everyone occasionally feels blue or sad, but these feelings usually pass within a couple of days. When a person has depression, it interferes with his or her daily life and routine, such as going to work or school, taking care of children, and relationships with family and friends. Depression causes pain for the person who has it and for those who care about him or her.

Depression can be very different in different people or in the same person over time. It is a common but serious illness. Treatment can help those with even the most severe depression get better.

What are the symptoms of depression?

- Ongoing sad, anxious or empty feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Feeling irritable or restless
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies that were once enjoyable, including sex
- Feeling tired all the time
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, or difficulty making decisions
- Not able to go to sleep or stay asleep (insomnia); may wake in the middle of the night, or sleep all the time
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Thoughts of suicide or making suicide attempts
- Ongoing aches and pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not go away.

Not everyone diagnosed with depression will have all of these symptoms. The signs and symptoms may be different in men, women, younger children and older adults.

Can a person have depression and another illness at the same time?

Often, people have other illnesses along with depression. Sometimes other illnesses come first, but other times the depression comes first. Each person and situation is different, but it is important not to ignore these illnesses and to get treatment for them and the depression. Some illnesses or disorders that may occur along with depression are:

- Anxiety disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, social phobia, and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD);
- Alcohol and other substance abuse or dependence;
- Heart disease, stroke, cancer, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, and Parkinson's disease.

Studies have found that treating depression can help in treating these other illnesses.

When does depression start?

Young children and teens can get depression but it can occur at other ages also. Depression is more common in women than in men, but men do get depression too. Loss of a loved one, stress and hormonal changes, or traumatic events may trigger depression at any age.

Is there help?

There is help for someone who has depression. Even in severe cases, depression is highly treatable. The first step is to visit a doctor. Your family doctor or a health clinic is a good place to start. A doctor can make

sure that the symptoms of depression are not being caused by another medical condition. A doctor may refer you to a mental health professional.

The most common treatments of depression are psychotherapy and medication.