



SHIAWASSEE Health & Wellness

Let's Talk About DEPRESSION

Sure, everybody feels sad or blue now and then. But if you're sad most of the time, and it's giving you problems with your grades or attendance at work or school; your relationships with your family and friends; alcohol, drugs, or sex; controlling your behavior in other ways ... the problem may be depression. The good news is that you can get treatment and **feel better soon**.

Approximately 4% of adolescents get seriously depressed each year. Clinical depression is a serious illness that can affect anybody. It can affect your thoughts, feelings, behavior, and overall health. Most people with depression can be helped with treatment. But a majority of depressed people never get the help they need. And, when depression goes left untreated, it can get worse, last longer, and prevent you from getting the most out of this important time in your life.

There are two kinds of depressive illness: major depression (when you are feeling sad) and manic-depression or bipolar disorder (feeling down and depressed alternates with being speeded-up and sometimes reckless). You should get an evaluation by a professional if you have had five or more of the following symptoms for more than two weeks or if any of these symptoms cause such a big change that you cannot keep up your usual day-to-day activities.

When You are Depressed ...

- You feel sad or cry a lot and it does not go away.
- You feel guilty for no reason; you feel like you are worthless; you have lost your confidence.
- Life seems meaningless or like nothing good is ever going to happen again. You have a negative attitude a lot of the time, or it seems like you have no feelings.
- You do not feel like doing a lot of the things you used to enjoy – such as listening to music, playing sports, being with friends, going out – and you want to be left alone most of the time.
- It is hard to make up your mind. You forget lots of things, and it is hard to concentrate.
- You get irritated often. Little things make you lose your temper; you over-react.
- Your sleep pattern changes; you start sleeping a lot more or you have trouble falling asleep at night. Or you wake up really early most mornings and can't get back to sleep.
- Your eating pattern changes; you have lost your appetite, or you eat a lot more.
- You feel restless and tired most of the time.
- You think about death, or feel like you are dying, or have thoughts about committing suicide.

When You are Manic ...

- You are rebellious or irritable and cannot get along at home or school, or with your friends.
- You feel high as a kite ... like you are "on top of the world."
- You get unreal ideas about the great things you can do ... things that you really cannot do.
- Thoughts go racing through your head, you jump from one subject to another, and you talk a lot.
- You are a non-stop party, constantly running around.
- You do too many wild or risky things: with driving, with spending money, with sex, etc.
- You are so "up" that you do not need much sleep.

Should I Talk to Someone?

If you are concerned about depression in yourself or a friend. TALK TO SOMEONE about it. There are people who can help you get treatment, such as:

- A professional at Shiawassee Health & Wellness
- A trusted family member
- Your family doctor
- Your clergy
- A school counselor or nurse
- A social worker
- A responsible adult

Let's Get Serious

Having depression does not mean that a person is weak, or a failure, or is not really trying ... it means they need treatment. Most people with depression can be helped with psychotherapy, medication, or both together. Short-term psychotherapy, means talking about feelings with a trained professional who can help you change the relationships, thoughts, or behaviors that contribute to depression. Medication has been developed that effectively treats depression that is severe or disabling. Antidepressant medications are not "uppers" and are not addictive. Sometimes, several types may have to be tried before you and your doctor find the one that works best for you. Treatment can help most depressed people start to feel better within just a few weeks.

So remember, when your problems seem too big and you are feeling low for too long, **you are not alone**. There is help out there and you can ask for help. And if you know someone who you think is depressed, you can help: **Listen and encourage your friend to seek treatment.**

What You Need to Know About Suicide

Most people who are depressed do not commit suicide. But depression increases the risk for suicide or suicide attempts. It is **not** true that people who talk about suicide do not attempt it. Suicidal thoughts, remarks, or attempts are **always very serious** ... if any of these happen to you or a friend, you must tell a responsible adult **immediately**.

Why Do People Get Depressed?

Sometimes people get seriously depressed after something like a divorce in the family, major financial problems, someone you love dying, a messed up home life, or break in a close relationship. Other times, like with other illness, depression just happens.

What about Depression, Alcohol and Other Drugs

A lot of depressed people, especially teenagers, also have problems with alcohol or other drugs. (Alcohol is a drug, too.) Sometimes the depression comes first and people try drugs as a way to escape it. (In the long run, drugs or alcohol just make things worse!) Other times, the alcohol or other drug use comes first, and depression is caused by: the drug itself, or withdrawal from it, or the problems that substance use causes. And sometimes you cannot tell which came first ... the important point is that when you have both of these problems, the sooner you get treatment, the better.

For Additional Information About Depression, contact:

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