

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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Depression - A Complex Disease

Most people have felt sad or depressed at times. Feeling depressed can be a normal reaction to loss, life's struggles, or an injured self-esteem.

But when feelings of intense sadness -- including feeling helpless, hopeless, and worthless -- last for days to weeks and keep you from functioning normally, your depression may be something more than sadness. It may very well be clinical depression -- a treatable medical condition.

According to the DSM-IV, a manual used to diagnose mental disorders, depression occurs when you have at least five of the following nine symptoms at the same time:

1. a depressed mood during most of the day, particularly in the morning
2. fatigue or loss of energy almost every day
3. feelings of worthlessness or guilt almost every day
4. impaired concentration, indecisiveness
5. insomnia or hypersomnia (excessive sleeping) almost every day



6. markedly diminished interest or pleasure in almost all activities nearly every day
7. recurring thoughts of death or suicide (not just fearing death)
8. a sense of restlessness -- known as psychomotor agitation -- or being slowed down -- retardation
9. significant weight loss or gain (a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month)

How long do these signs have to be present?

With major or clinical depression, one of the key signs is either depressed mood or loss of interest. For a diagnosis of depression, these signs should be present most of the day either daily or nearly daily for at least two weeks. In

addition, the depressive symptoms need to cause clinically significant distress or impairment. They cannot be due to the direct effects of a substance, for example, a drug or medication. Nor can they be the result of a medical condition such as hypothyroidism. Finally, if the symptoms occur within two months of the loss of a loved one, they will not be diagnosed as depression.

Common Feelings Associated With Depression

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, people with depressive illnesses do not all experience the same symptoms. How severe they are, how frequent, and how long they last will vary.

(Over)

Depression - A Complex Disease (Continued)

It depends on the individual and his or her particular illness. Here are common symptoms people with depression experience:

- difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- fatigue and decreased energy
- feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness
- feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- insomnia, early morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- irritability, restlessness
- loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- no pleasure left in life any more
- overeating or appetite loss
- persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment
- persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” feelings
- thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts

Depression Has Physical Symptoms

Because certain brain chemicals or neurotransmitters, specifically serotonin and norepinephrine, influence both mood and pain, it's not uncommon for depressed individuals to have physical symptoms. These symptoms may include joint pain, back pain,

gastrointestinal problems, sleep disturbances, and appetite changes. The symptoms may also be accompanied by slowed speech and physical retardation. Many patients go from doctor to doctor seeking treatment for their physical symptoms when, in fact, they are clinically depressed.

Depression commonly occurs with other illnesses such as anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder, phobias, and eating disorders. If you or a loved one has symptoms of depression and/or these other mental illnesses, talk to your doctor. Treatment is available to lift the depression so you or a loved one can regain your meaningful life.

Sources: Webmd.com

Benefits Corner

CHP

Tools to assist in quitting smoking

Smoking Cessation Prescription Drugs. \$250 yearly maximum, \$500 lifetime maximum.

Over the Counter (OTC) Smoking Cessation Products

Receive discounts for these products at www.nextxotc.com

Online Tools Available to CHP Members

Ready, Set, Stop!

Available at www.anthem.com, click on the MyHealth@Anthem link. Once you have logged in, click 360 degree Health > My Health @Anthem > Healthy Living > Stop Smoking. You will get a list of smoking cessation resources, Stop Smoking News and the Ready, Set, Stop Online Program. (10 sessions). (If you are a new user, it will take a few seconds to register) This is a free benefit.

Online Quit Kit

Available at www.anthem.com. This program is also available as a free online benefit and provides resources to support individual needs for cessation resources.

Living Free

Available at www.anthem.com. This program is not free, the cost is \$125. This program provides online coaching support with workbooks and other tools.

National Quit Line 1-800-QuitNow. This free telephone program routes callers to their respective state-sponsored quit line which offers callers a variety of services ranging from one-on-one telephone counseling to resources for local, state and national smoking cessation programs.