

Doesn't everybody get depressed?

Everybody feels sad or "blue" sometimes. People may casually say, "I feel so depressed," or "That's really depressing." But there are big differences between normal sad feelings and clinical depression. Clinical depression is a serious disorder that affects health and well-being. It can happen to anyone, even healthy people who seem successful and fulfilled. Untreated, it can be debilitating, incapacitating, and dangerous.

What is clinical depression?

In clinical depression, brain chemicals that control mood are depleted or unbalanced. This can lead to overwhelming sadness, high anxiety, and negative perceptions of self and others.

How can I tell if I'm depressed?

Signs that point to clinical depression include:

- Feelings of sadness. Do you feel sad most of the time? Do you cry a lot?
- Sleep disturbances. Does it take you a long time to fall asleep? Do you wake up in the middle of the night or extremely early and find yourself unable to go back to sleep? Do you sleep way too little or way too much?
- Changes in appetite. Do you feel turned off food and unable to eat? At the other extreme, do you find that you overeat constantly?
- Changes in weight. Did you lose or gain a lot of weight within a short time?
- Loss of concentration. Do you find it hard to focus, complete tasks, and make decisions?
- Loss of interest in friends and activities. Do you avoid people and activities that you used to enjoy?
- Lack of energy. Do you feel slow, lethargic, and unable to carry out ordinary daily activities?
- Neglect of personal appearance. Have you stopped attending to how you look?
- Restlessness. Are you fidgety and distractible? Do you need to move around a lot?
- Self-criticism. Do you constantly think about flaws, faults and failures you see in yourself?
- Self-mutilation. Do you cut yourself or otherwise disfigure your body?
- Thoughts of suicide. Do you think about death or suicide often and in detail?

This fact sheet is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

DEPRESSION FAQS

What can I do if I think I'm seriously depressed?

Get help. Talk to a trusted adult. Consult someone knowledgeable: a physician, counselor, social worker, or psychologist. If you need immediate help, call a hotline.

What if I think my friend is depressed?

Again, get help. Talk to a trusted adult, even if your friend told you not to tell. Your friend's safety could be at stake.

What treatments are available for depression?

Drugs can help by correcting your brain chemistry. Antidepressant drugs may be prescribed by a physician. Traditional "talking" therapies also are helpful. Many consider a combination of drugs and psychotherapy to be the most effective treatment.

Two key points to remember about treatment:

- Treatment must be supervised by a professional. Don't attempt to treat yourself, and do follow your doctor's instructions.
- Successful treatment takes time. It's important to stick with it, and not to stop the minute you feel better.