Families Together of Orange County

DEPRESSION FACT SHEET

What is Depression?

Depression is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts. It affects the way a person eats and sleeps, the way one feels about oneself, and the way one thinks about things. A depressive disorder is not the same as a passing blue mood. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely “pull themselves together” and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months or years. Appropriate treatment, however, can help most people who suffer from depression.

Who Is At Risk For Depression?

- People who have a family member with depression.
- People who have experienced a stressful or traumatic life event.
- People who lack the social support of a spouse, friends and extended family.
- People who abuse drugs or alcohol.
- People who have chronic medical illnesses or persistent pain.

Symptons of Depression

Not everyone who is depressed experiences every symptom of depression. Some people experience a few symptoms, some many. Severity of symptoms varies with individuals and also varies over time.

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood.
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism.
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex.
- Decreased energy, fatigue, or feeling slowed down.
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions.
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping.
- Lack of appetite or weight loss or overeating and weight gain.
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts.
- Restlessness, irritability.
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain.

If You Think You Have Depression

- Remember, your depression is **not** your fault and it can be effectively treated.
- Seek treatment. Don't let misconceptions about emotional illness or the discouragement of your depression stop you. Either on your own or by asking a friend or family member, contact your family doctor or trusted health care provider, community health center, or local medical or psychiatric hospital for help.
- In the weeks until treatment becomes effective, you can take some simple steps to help you deal with life on a day-to-day basis:

    1. Break large tasks into small steps.
    2. Set easily managed priorities.
    3. Participate in light exercise and relatively undemanding social activities, such as attending a movie or visiting a friend.
    4. Simply being with others can be helpful.

What you can do if you are depressed

- If you feel you are in crisis, whether or not you are thinking about suicide, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). This free number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The trained crisis worker on the line can direct you to mental health services in your area.
- Discuss this information, and your symptoms, with a member of your health center care team.
- Contact the Department of Psychiatry at your nearest university medical school to determine if they have or can recommend a mood/affective disorder clinic. If not, ask for their referrals to providers in the community who specialize in the treatment of depression.
- If you, or someone you know, has been diagnosed with depression and treatment has not been effective within three months, get a second consultation, preferably from a provider who specializes in the treatment of this illness.