

Depression in Teens Often Returns

MOST DEPRESSED TEENS RESPOND WELL TO therapy, whether drug or behavioral, but with time, even those who have recovered fully become vulnerable to new bouts of illness.

Researchers now report that nearly 50% of teens who were successfully treated for depression for 12 weeks—using Prozac alone, cognitive-behavior therapy alone or a combination of both—relapsed within five years. Girls were more likely than boys to become depressed again, the study showed.

But the most surprising finding was that the type of treatment did not affect the recurrence rate, even though the scientists had expected the combination therapy to be more effective in preventing future depressive episodes. It also didn't seem to make a difference whether the teens responded fully or only partly to the initial intervention, which, say the scientists, might reflect the fact that depression is an episodic disease. The results highlight the need for regular monitoring of patients so doctors can better understand and address the factors that trigger recurrence before they result in serious illness.