

DEPRESSION

Depression is a mood disorder, involving your body, thoughts, and behavior. It affects the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about once pleasurable activities. A depressive illness is not a passing blue mood or a sign of personal weakness. People with depressive illness cannot willfully "pull themselves together" and get better. Depression is a combination of symptoms that interfere with your daily ability to function normally at work, home and socially. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months or years.

At any given time, ten million Americans suffer from this disabling illness, which can appear at any age. One in five adults can experience depression at some point in their life. About five percent of children and adolescents also suffer from this disorder. It is twice as common in females than males.

Signs of Depression:

- *Depressed or sad mood, excessive crying.
- *Irritable mood in children and adolescents.
- *Decreased interest or pleasure in almost all activities, lack of interest in yourself.
- *Change in appetite and/or weight
- *Change in sleep pattern
- *Restlessness, irritability, agitation, feeling "on edge or nervous"
- *Decreased energy or fatigue, feeling "slowed down."
- *Continual feelings of worthlessness, excessive guilt, or hopelessness
- *Lack of concentration or indecision
- *Avoidance of family or friends
- *Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts.

Depression, if left untreated can persist for years and may result in suicide. It is the most treatable of all mental illnesses. With modern treatment methods, people can return to full and productive lives.

If you or someone you know appears to suffer from the signs of depression, call for help.

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