

Understanding and Spotting Signs of Depression

Depression is a mental disorder affecting children, teenagers, adults, and elderly people. When depression strikes, debilitating sadness often occurs that affects someone's ability to function and carry out daily tasks. Depression can have a variety of causes, including life events and illnesses. Depression may also have a dangerous correlation with other negative health outcomes, such as obesity and heart disease.

What is Depression?

Nearly everyone has an off day or periodic feelings of sadness. However, depression is a prevalent mental illness, with estimates that one out of every 10 adults in the United States struggles with it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. With depression, a person experiences overwhelming sadness or apathy that interferes with the ability to function. To meet the criteria for diagnosis, specific symptoms must be present that interfere with sleep, eating, self-image, energy, and concentration for at least two weeks. In addition, the symptoms cannot be associated with another cause, such as bereavement, physical illness, or substance use.

Types of Depression

Several different types of depression exist with varying causes and symptoms. Major depressive disorder involves symptoms of overwhelming sadness that persist and disrupt normal daily function. A person who experiences depression for two or more years may be experiencing persistent depressive disorder. This form of depression is not as debilitating as major depressive disorder, but it involves many of the same symptoms of sadness and lethargy. Bipolar disorder involves extreme variations in moods, from manic highs with boundless energy to deep lows of depression. During the depressive phases, a person with bipolar disorder will exhibit symptoms akin to major depressive disorder.

Causes of Depression

A variety of issues can cause depression, including genetics, personal problems, and life events. With genetics, a family history can increase people's risk of developing the disorder. Some illnesses and medications can increase the risk of depression. A major life event or loss can trigger the onset of depression. In these situations, initial sadness would be a typical reaction, but depression could set in, prolonging the feelings of despondency. Incidences of past abuse can

also increase someone's risk of developing depression in the future. Finally, people engaging in substance abuse have a higher risk of developing depression in connection with the abuse.

Signs and Symptoms

A person experiencing depression will show typical signs and symptoms of the illness. An overwhelming sadness and emptiness is a principle sign of depression. A person struggling with depression may also lose interest in previously enjoyed activities and hobbies. Loss of energy, difficulty concentrating, lethargy, appetite changes, sleep disturbances, and restlessness are also common symptoms that accompany depression. A depressed person could also have feelings of anxiety and irritability, with angry outbursts occurring.

How to Help

Upon recognizing symptoms of depression, reach out to a family member or friend to offer support and assistance. It's possible that the depressed person doesn't recognize the issues, so you might encourage the person to seek help. Express your love to the person and offer encouragement. If the depressed person is not able to function independently due to the depression, you may need to intervene and get medical help. If you hear any hints of thought of suicide or self-harm from the person, consider it a medical emergency and get immediate assistance. Do not give up on a depressed person, even if it takes some time and effort for the person to begin feeling more positive. Never agree to hide or cover up depressed feelings to enable a depressed person to avoid seeking help.

Things to Keep in Mind

Fighting and overcoming depression can take time. A depressed person may experience ongoing struggles, with periods of feeling better and then feeling worse again. Strive to maintain positive support and encouragement for a friend or family member. Be available to listen if the depressed person wants to talk. It's possible that a depressed person could become angry and lash out at others due to feelings of overwhelming sadness and hopelessness. If this happens, do not take the behavior personally, and continue to provide positive support. While you cannot force someone to overcome depression, you can remain a consistent source of support to help someone begin to feel better.

Types of Treatment

Several different treatment options can be effective for resolving depression. Depression treatment options can help resolve symptoms for children, teenagers, adults, and the elderly. A professional will assess symptoms in the patient and devise a course of treatment that fits the individual age and symptoms of the patient. A physician or psychiatrist may prescribe medication to treat symptoms. Various medications are available, and a physician may need to experiment with different medications before finding one that works for a patient. Inpatient

hospitalization could also be necessary to provide acute care for a depressed patient. Other patients can recover with outpatient care that includes individual and group therapy.

Resources

Although depression can feel debilitating, it's possible to work through it with the help of professionals and the support of family and friends. Family and friends surrounding a depressed person can play an integral role in recovery because someone experiencing depression may not even realize it. Additionally, a person in the depths of depression may not have the ability to see a way out of the despair, but help from others can bring about positive change. By learning about the illness and what's involved in recovery, you can support someone on a road to more positive living.

- [Anxiety and Depression in Children](#)
- [Understanding Depression](#)
- [Childhood Depression: What Parents Can Do To Help](#)
- [The Depressed Child](#)
- [Teen Depression](#)
- [Depression in Children and Teens](#)
- [Five Ways to Fight Depression](#)
- [Mood Disorders and Teenage Girls](#)
- [An Estimated One in 10 U.S. Adults Report Depression](#)
- [Depression Overview](#)
- [Depression and Suicide in Older Adults Resource Guide](#)
- [Young Adult Depression](#)
- [The Geriatric Depression Scale](#)
- [Older Adults: Depression and Suicide Facts](#)
- [What is Depression?](#)
- [Depression Facts](#)
- [Depression and Veterans Fact Sheet](#)

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