



People with depression don't just "snap out of it."



Knowing all the signs and symptoms of depression can greatly improve your overall health and help you live a fulfilling life.



A GUIDE TO DEPRESSION



BEYOND SADNESS

Bridging the gap between emotional and physical symptoms of depression

Depression is a common and highly treatable condition.



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You can feel depression as aches and pains, too.



Depression is not a sign of weakness or laziness.



BEYOND SADNESS

If someone asked you if you are depressed, what would you say?
No way. I'm not sad. I get up and go to work every day. How can I be depressed?

Very often, when we think of a person who has depression, images of sadness, crying or loneliness come to mind. But, there are many other symptoms we do not often associate with emotional distress. For example, did you know that digestive problems, or unexplained aches and pains may signal depression?

Depression includes a cluster of both emotional and physical symptoms that are controlled by chemicals called neurotransmitters. Usually, emotional symptoms are used to detect depression. But research has shown that physical symptoms are very common in depression and should not be overlooked.

THE MIND-BODY LINK

Nerve pathways determine how your body handles pain sensations and emotions. Your spinal cord is like your body's "Main Street," sending messages back and forth to organs, nerves and cells. These messages are relayed by neurotransmitters in the brain that regulate a person's emotions and sensitivity to pain.

If these neurotransmitters are out of balance, a person may become depressed and be more likely to feel physical symptoms or pre-existing pain may become worse. The combination of physical and emotional effects of depression can truly interfere with a person's quality of life.

SYMPTOM CHECKLIST

Most people don't understand depression. But, knowing all of the signs and symptoms can greatly improve your or a loved one's overall health, and prevent losing years to an undiagnosed illness.

To give the best care, your health care provider needs the full picture—even things you do not think are important to bring up.

Read the following list, check those that apply to you and bring it to your health care provider. Checking these items does not mean you have depression, but because many depression symptoms overlap with other illnesses, this information can be useful during your visit.

Check all that apply:

- I am often restless and irritable.
- I am having irregular sleep patterns—either too much or not enough.
- I don't enjoy hobbies, my friends, family or leisure activities any more.
- I am having trouble managing my diabetes, hypertension or other chronic illness.
- I have nagging aches and pains that do not get better no matter what I do.
- Specifically, I often experience:
 - Digestive problems
 - Headache or backache
 - Vague aches and pains like joint or muscle pains
 - Chest pains
 - Dizziness
- I have trouble concentrating or making simple decisions.
- Others have commented on my mood or attitude lately.
- My weight has changed a considerable amount.
- I have had several of the symptoms I checked above for more than two weeks.
- I feel that my functioning in my everyday life (work, family, friends) is suffering because of these problems.
- I have a family history of depression.
- I have thought about suicide.

Now that you have filled out the checklist, read on for tips on how to talk to your health care provider

TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Your health care provider relies on the information you share to keep you healthy. Even though it can be difficult to talk about certain things, there is no need to feel rushed or embarrassed with your health care provider. He or she is there to help.

Here are some conversation starters that you may find helpful:

CONVERSATION STARTERS



"I just don't feel like myself lately."

"My spouse thinks I might be depressed."



"I am having trouble controlling my diabetes, hypertension, or other chronic illness."



"I haven't been sleeping well lately."

"Could I possibly have depression?"

I HAVE DEPRESSION... NOW WHAT?



If you are diagnosed with depression you need to know that it is common and highly treatable. Some people have difficulty accepting their depression because they feel it shows weakness or laziness. This is not true. Most are grateful to find a reason for their symptoms and to know they can be treated effectively.

Remember, depression is not your fault; it is a real illness with medical causes. Your habits or personality did not cause your depression and you do not have to face it alone.

Your health care provider will discuss treatment options with you and together you can arrive at the best course of action. We are glad you have taken this first step toward recovery.

For more information on depression and treatment, contact:

University of Michigan Depression Center
800-475-MICH
www.med.umich.edu/depression

National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association
800-826-3632 www.ndmda.org

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
800-950-NAMI www.nami.org

National Mental Health Association
800-228-1114 www.nmha.org