WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.

Depression is more than a low mood or a feeling of sadness at a loss. It is a serious medical condition which causes both physical and psychological symptoms which is detected, can be treated using a range of effective treatment approaches.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

There are several symptoms of depression:

- Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness
- Angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters
- Loss of interest or pleasure in most or all normal activities, such as sex, hobbies or sports
- Sleep disturbances, including insomnia or sleeping too much
- Tiredness and lack of energy, so even small tasks take extra effort
- Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain
- Slowed thinking, speaking or body movements
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fixating on past failures or self-blame
- Trouble thinking, concentrating, making decisions and remembering things
- Frequent or recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts or suicide
- Unexplained physical problems, such as back pain or headaches

DEPRESSION IN YOUTH

One in five children and adolescents is affected by mental health problems and disorders. Those aged 18-24 have the highest prevalence of mental disorders of any age group.

In youth, the symptoms of depression may include:

- sadness
- irritability
- clinginess
- worry
- aches and pains
- socially withdrawn
- feeling misunderstood and extremely sensitive

TYPES OF DEPRESSION

Anxious distress

Melancholia

Atypical depression
Factors, Depression

Atypical
Anxious
Melancholia

Anxious distress
A feeling unusual restlessness or worry about possible events or loss of control.

Melancholia
A severe depression with lack of response to something that used to bring pleasure and associated with early morning awakening, worsened mood in the morning, major changes in appetite, and feelings of guilt, agitation or sluggishness.

Atypical depression
Atypical depression includes the ability to be temporarily cheered by happy events, increased appetite, excessive need for sleep, sensitivity to rejection, and a heavy feeling in arms or legs.

CAUSES OF DEPRESSION
Depression results from a combination of physical and psychological factors, causing chemical changes in the brain.

Physical Factors
- Mental Illness & Treatment
- Chemical Changes
- Inherited traits
- Substance Abuse

Psychological factors
- High anxiety
- Negative experiences
- Life stresses

Getting Help

DEPRESSION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Eating healthy, balanced diet; exercising; having a good sleep.
- Learning about depression; talk to your doctor or mental health professional to ensure the information is accurate.
- Spending time with family and friends; they play an important role in supporting you.

OTHER TREATMENTS

Psychological Treatments
Talk therapy can help you change your perspective and improve your coping skills.

Education and counselling help the person reduce the stress, resolve conflicts, manage their life more effectively and develop new ways of thinking about themselves and the world.

Medication
A prescription for an antidepressant improves sleep, concentration, energy and can contribute to better mood and less anxiety.

Seek help from a medical practitioner
Your medical practitioner can help develop the most appropriate treatment approach for individuals and may also draw upon the expertise of other health professionals.

For more information on depression, contact:
Mental Health Foundation Australia
www.mhfa.org.au

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