

# Depression

You have signs of depression. This is a common problem. It can occur at any age. It is often hard to recognize. People can suffer from depression and still have moments of enjoyment. Depression interferes with your basic ability to function in life. It upsets your relationships, sleep, eating, and work habits.

## CAUSES

Depression is believed to be caused by an imbalance in brain chemicals. It may be triggered by an unpleasant event. Relationship crises, a death in the family, financial worries, retirement, or other stressors are normal causes of depression. Depression may also start for no known reason. Other factors that may play a part include medical illnesses, some medicines, genetics, and alcohol or drug abuse.

## SYMPTOMS

- Feeling unhappy or worthless.
- Long-lasting (chronic) tiredness or worn-out feeling.
- Self-destructive thoughts and actions.
- Not being able to sleep or sleeping too much.
- Eating more than usual or not eating at all.
- Headaches or feeling anxious.
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions.
- Unexplained physical problems and substance abuse.

## TREATMENT

Depression usually gets better with treatment. This can include:

- Antidepressant medicines. It can take weeks before the proper dose is achieved and benefits are reached.
- Talking with a therapist, clergy person, counselor, or friend. These people can help you gain insight into your problem and regain control of your life.
- Eating a good diet.
- Getting regular physical exercise, such as walking for 30 minutes every day.
- Not abusing alcohol or drugs.

Treating depression often takes 6 months or longer. This length of treatment is needed to keep symptoms from returning. Call your caregiver and arrange for follow-up care as suggested.

## SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You start to have thoughts of hurting yourself or others.
  - Call your local emergency services (911 in U.S.).
  - Go to your local medical emergency department.
  - Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).