

DEPRESSION

Clinical depression is a serious and treatable medical illness experienced by as many as one in five Americans over a lifetime. Without treatment, the symptoms can last for months, years or a lifetime.

Depression comes in various forms - Some depressive episodes occur suddenly for no apparent reason. Some are triggered by a stressful experience. Some people have one episode in a lifetime; others, recurrent episodes. Some people's symptoms are so severe they are unable to function as usual. Others have ongoing, chronic symptoms that do not interfere with functioning, but keep them from feeling really well.

Many people with clinical depression do not seek appropriate treatment because their symptoms are not recognized, are blamed on personal weakness or are so disabling they cannot reach out for help. Depression may also be misdiagnosed and wrongly treated.

Symptoms Of Depression Are:

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities, including sex
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia, early-morning waking or oversleeping)
- Eating disturbances (loss of appetite and weight, or weight gain)
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being “slowed down”
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions

At times, depressive disorders masquerade as persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders and chronic pain.

Eighty percent of people with serious depression – even those with the most severe forms – can be treated effectively. Symptoms can be relieved within weeks using medication, psychotherapy or a combination of both.

Depression strikes people of all nationalities, backgrounds, ages and lifestyles.

Fortunately, early recognition and treatment serve to decrease the length and severity of depressive episodes for most people.