

Tip Sheet: Understanding Depression

Depression is a mental health issue that millions of people deal with every year. It is more than having the “blues” or feeling “down.” People suffering from depression have extreme difficulty doing things that you usually take for granted, such as waking up, showering, eating meals, going to work or socializing with friends. When you are depressed, you feel sapped of energy, and may lack any desire to do anything enjoyable. Fortunately, this condition is treatable, and people can live happier and fuller lives.

The causes of depression can range from a chemical imbalance to some sort of psychological trauma, like childhood abuse or neglect, or extremely stressful situations. Experts have commonly accepted that depression can be hereditary, and people with a family history of depression are more likely to become depressed if conditions are right, like experiencing a trauma or facing overwhelming stress.

Whatever the cause, the symptoms are the same:

- Insomnia
- Sleeping more
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Prolonged lack of interest in once pleasurable activities
- Significant changes in appetite
- Weight gain/loss
- Poor concentration
- Increased irritability or restlessness
- Excessive or uncontrollable crying spells
- Preoccupation with death/dying or suicidal thoughts

There are many options when treating depression. The use of medication prescribed by a psychiatrist has proven to be effective when dealing with more severe forms of depression. Getting psychotherapy from a mental health professional has also been effective in helping people overcome past traumatic events and better manage stressors in their lives. Sometimes, using a combination of both psychotherapy and medication can be most effective.