

DEPRESSION

‘I feel like crying all the time, I am so tired and I can’t get interested in anything. I can’t even do basic jobs that seem so easy to other people’.

‘I feel so alone, I guess nobody likes me. I just hate myself and wish for life to end, because what’s the point in living’.

These are often thoughts of depressed people.

Depression is a common problem that involves the body, mood, and thoughts. It is seen in at least 16% of the population. It affects the way a person eats and sleeps, the way one feels about oneself, and the way one thinks about things. A depressive disorder is not the same as a passing blue mood. People with a depressive illness cannot merely "pull themselves together" and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Appropriate treatment, however, can help most people who suffer from depression.

Symptoms of depression

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- Feelings of worthlessness, helplessness hopelessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

These symptoms should be present for at least 2 weeks to be called as depression

Why do we get depressed?

- *Things that happen in our lives:* stressful situations like death of loved one, loss of job, change in routine can gets us stuck in a depressed mood. This causes a chemical imbalance in the brain.
- *Physical illness:* cancer, heart disease, diabetes, asthma or even some medications can cause low mood.
- *Personality:* some are more prone because of life’s early experiences

- *Alcohol*: drinking can cause depression, and depression increases drinking!
- *Gender*: women are more likely to get depressed. This may be due to added responsibilities or hormonal changes (premenstrual, menopause)
- *Genes*: if one parent has depression, you are eight times more likely to become depressed.

What to do when depressed?

Help oneself by setting realistic goals, breaking tasks and mild exercise

Take professional help if the need arises, in the form of counseling or medicines

Antidepressants are not habit forming and help in improving the symptoms and preventing relapses in the long run

Try to gather a good support system from friends or family for expressing one's emotional needs

Expect mood to improve gradually, it takes time!

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