

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

Depression: Symptoms to Watch for and When to Contact Your Physician

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Depression is a collection of symptoms people experience for weeks, months or years. Several causes for depression (vitamin deficiencies, thyroid problems, blood disorders, low self-esteem, alcohol or drug use, chronic medical conditions, pregnancy, grief, major life changes, etc.) have been well documented. Still, in some cases, it is not possible to identify one specific cause.

Since sadness is the major symptom of depression, it is often difficult to tell the two apart. Everyone can feel sadness, but normal sadness is often limited to a couple of days, while depression can persist for weeks, months or years. Depression is a common problem, and it is treated with a combination of medications and psychotherapy.

SYMPTOMS

If you experience one or more symptoms from this list, please seek help from your provider:

- Feeling sad or hopeless nearly every day for more than two weeks
- Low mood affecting your daily activity at home or work
- Feeling guilty, helpless or worthless for several days
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Decreased or increased appetite
- Feeling tired and/or loss of interest in sex
- Frequent thoughts about death
- Various body aches and pain nearly every day or most days
- Thinking about or making plans to hurt yourself or others

IDENTIFICATION AND TREATMENT

Early identification and treatment of depression are key to reduce symptoms and recurrence. You can also take steps to improve depression symptoms, such as mindfulness, regular exercise, developing a routine, staying connected with friends/family and keeping a healthy diet. Talk with your doctor to find the treatment that is right for you.

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