

Depression

A number of factors can cause depression. Depression is not abnormal—we all can feel sadness from time to time in our lives.

However, you need to be concerned when your mood is affecting your health, your ability to perform at work or school, or your relationships, or if you are contemplating harming yourself. Depression can be triggered by:

- ❖ A family history of depression. It is believed there may be some genetic roots to depression.
- ❖ Dealing with losses. This could be over the death of a loved one, children leaving home, or the loss of something very important to you such as your health, a job, or a relationship.
- ❖ Conflicts within the family.
- ❖ Abuse that could be physical, emotional, or sexual.
- ❖ Health problems or medication combinations.

How do you know if you are depressed? Symptoms include:

- ❖ Overall sadness, tearfulness.
- ❖ Low energy.
- ❖ Weight gain or loss.
- ❖ Irregular sleeping patterns—too little or a lot of sleep, waking during the night, trouble falling asleep.
- ❖ Physical aches and pains without a medical reason.
- ❖ Sexual dysfunction.
- ❖ Difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- ❖ Suicidal feelings.

There are different types of depression that only a skilled clinician should diagnose. Please be cautious about inventories sponsored by companies that could benefit from your diagnosis. Currently there is a movement to encourage the diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder, which used to be called Manic Depression. The “diagnostic” tests, outlined in popular literature, make many psychiatrists cringe. The only individuals who should be making a diagnosis are physicians, psychiatrists, trained CRNPs and PAs, and master’s-level therapists, which include counselors, social workers, and psychologists.

The best treatment for depression is a combination of therapy and medication. If the depression is less severe, medication is often not needed. Pennsylvania licenses mental health professionals to protect consumers. This license assures you that the therapist has

received the training necessary to treat your depression. Medications that are often used are referred to as SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors). Examples of these medications are Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and Celexa. Serotonin is one of many neurotransmitters or chemicals in the brain and seems to play a significant role in regulation of mood. These medications help the brain cells with the absorption and re-absorption (reuptake) of serotonin. This then helps to regulate moods and lessen symptoms of depression. Therapy is more beneficial at this point, as you feel able to adequately address any issues that may be contributing to your mood.

For more information on depression, contact any of Diakon Family Life Services' sites, found on the Web at www.diakon.org/fls.