

What is Depression?

Depression is a serious medical illness, just like diabetes or high blood pressure. It doubles the risk of developing heart disease. It complicates many other medical conditions.

What are some of the Common SYMPTOMS of Depression?

- Sadness most of the day, nearly every day
- Loss of interest in things that you use to enjoy
- Lack of energy
- Sleeping too little or sleeping too much
- Eating too little or eating too much
- Weight changes, either up or down
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and worthlessness
- Trouble being able to make decisions
- Thoughts of death
- Many people with depression do not have all of the symptoms

What CAUSES Depression?

Doctors think that it might be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. The imbalance could be caused by your genes or by events in your life or maybe both. The brain chemicals involved are serotonin (pronounced “sarah-tone-in”) and norepinephrin (pronounced “nor-ep-in-nef-frin”). Sometimes events in a person’s life make the person believe that their difficult times are permanent and beyond the person’s control, and caused by not being a strong or good person. Those beliefs make depression worse.

Do People CHOOSE to be Depressed?

NO!! People do not choose to be depressed any more than they choose to have diabetes or high blood pressure. It is NOT because they are weak or “crazy”. Depression affects more than 17 million Americans a year.

How is Depression TREATED?

Depression can be treated with medicine, counseling or both. The combination helps most people.

The medicines that are used to treat depression are called anti-depressants. They help increase the brain chemicals.

In counseling, persons with depression have a place to discuss the situations that are troubling them. In counseling, persons with depression can learn additional ways to think about their situations and to deal with those situations differently.

Both medication and counseling can take a few weeks to a month or so to have an effect, so it is important to take the medication as prescribed and to stick with counseling.