

Depression.: What is it, who does it affect and how is it identified and treated?

The term *Depression or Clinical Depression* is used to explain what is called a depressive disorder. A depressive disorder includes symptoms that affect a person for more than two weeks and interfere with their daily living. Depression is more than a sad mood or normal grief caused by the loss of a loved one or relationship. It is typical to experience brief symptoms of sadness or grief, but one is generally able to carry out typical daily functions and recover without treatment. This is not true for Depression.

It's important for people to understand that one cannot just "snap out of" or "shake off" Depression. Depression is a common illness that affects people of all ages, races, and walks of life around the world. Just as one does not do anything to have pneumonia, one is not at fault for Depression; it is an illness. There is no need to be ashamed of Depression, as it is not a sign of weakness or lack of will power. The brain is an organ, just as the heart is, so there is no more reason to be embarrassed about treatment for Depression than there is for heart disease.

Depression is usually diagnosed in a primary care setting, not a mental health setting, as it can be difficult to diagnose. Consequently it is frequently under diagnosed and untreated. Symptoms of depression can affect a person's mood, thinking, bodily functions and/or behavior and may include: loss of interest or pleasure, feeling unusually sad or irritable, sleep disturbances, decreased ability to concentrate, changes in appetite, feeling more tired than usual, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, restless or slowed activity noticed by others, thoughts about suicide or death. Each person is different, so the symptoms can vary widely from person to person. Depression is a condition that should be taken seriously, as in extreme cases Depression can lead to suicide.

Despite the fact that majority of people will respond to treatment, most people with Depression never seek help. Even the most severe Depression is treatable. Effective ways to deal with depression include, lifestyle changes, therapy, medications and alternative treatments. There

is hope for Depression, so if you believe help is needed, a family doctor, counselor, or clergyman can be an excellent resource.