



OCTOBER IS...

Depression Screening Month

What is a depressive disorder?

A depressive disorder is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts. 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. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely “pull themselves together” and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Most people with a depressive illness do not seek treatment, although the great majority (even those whose depression is extremely severe) can be helped. Thanks to years of fruitful research, there are now medications and psychosocial therapies such as cognitive/behavioral, “talk,” or interpersonal that ease the pain of depression. Unfortunately, most people do not realize that depression is a treatable illness. If you feel that you or someone you care about is one of the many undiagnosed depressed people in this country, please contact your physician today for an evaluation!

In any given 1-year period, 9.5 percent of the population, or 18.8 million American adults, suffer from a depressive illness.

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How much do you know about depression?

- 1.) **True or False**, clinical depression is the most common serious brain disease in the U.S.
- 2.) **True or False**, people of all ages, backgrounds, lifestyles, and nationalities suffer from major clinical depression.
- 3.) **True or False**, eighty percent of those properly treated for clinical depression show an improvement in their symptoms generally within 4 to 6 weeks.
- 4.) **True or False**, more people die from suicide than from homicide.
- 5.) **True or False**, psychotropic drugs are the only way to treat clinical depression.
- 6.) **True or False**, men do not suffer from clinical depression.
- 7.) **True or False**, clinical depression costs the U.S. more than \$45 billion annually.
- 8.) **True or False**, sad events are the chief cause of clinical depression.
- 9.) **True or False**, there is nothing that family and friends can do to help a victim of clinical depression.
- 10.) **True or False**, clinically depressed children, women, and men can be highly successful and productive.

(See answer key on the back of this sheet)

Diagnostic Evaluation for Depression

1. Examination by a physician, to rule out a physical cause of depression
2. Psychological evaluation by a physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist
 - History of symptoms
 - Family history
 - Mental status examination
3. Treatment choice based on outcome of evaluation



The Wellness Program

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Could you have depression?

Use the following checklist to determine if you or someone you know could be suffering from clinical depression. If five or more of the following symptoms have lasted for more than two weeks, tell a doctor as soon as possible. Clinical depression can be treated successfully with medication and therapy.

- Feelings of sadness and/or irritability.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed.
- Changes in weight or appetite.
- Changes in sleeping pattern.
- Feeling guilty, hopeless, or worthless.
- Fatigue or loss of energy.
- Restlessness or decreased activity noticed by others.
- Thoughts of suicide or death.
- Inability to concentrate, remember things, or make decisions.

- TOTAL:** If you checked five or more symptoms and they have lasted more than two weeks, tell a doctor.

In addition, look for the following symptoms of the manic phase of bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression):

- Increased energy and decreased need for sleep.
- Inappropriate excitement or irritability.
- Increased talking or moving.
- Promiscuous sexual behavior.
- Disconnected and racing thoughts.
- Impulsive behavior and poor judgment.

Self-screening test courtesy of the National Mental Health Association

www.nmha.org

ANSWER KEY

- 1.) **True.** Depression is known to affect about 1 in 16 Americans each year. It is likely that many more cases of depression go undiagnosed. More people suffer from depression than other mental illnesses, including anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and Alzheimer's disease.
- 2.) **True.** Depression is likely to be the second greatest cause of premature death and disability worldwide by the year 2020 according to the World Health organization. In the U.S., suicide is the 11th leading cause of death for all Americans and the 2nd leading cause for young people aged 15-24. Depression among the young and the elderly is increasing annually.
- 3.) **True.** Psychotherapy and medication are very effective in treating depression. In addition, there is more evidence that support groups, and changes in nutrition and life style can help to relieve the symptoms of depression. For medium to major clinical depression, however, medication or ECT are also required.
- 4.) **True.** Though the media provided far more information on homicide than on suicide, for every two victims of homicide in the U. S., there are at least three people who take their own lives.
- 5.) **False.** Although psychotropic drugs, while far from perfect, are highly effective, adding counseling, life style changes and, sometimes, alternative treatments can also add to the chances of successful treatment and increased wellness.
- 6.) **False.** Women are more often diagnosed and treated for depression, but men often suffer from this illness. Men are more likely to self-treat the disease with alcohol and illegal drugs, and they are far more likely to carry out suicide.
- 7.) **True.** Various sources track the cost of depression, which includes medical expenses, lost productivity, and premature death. Work absenteeism alone costs \$12 billion. The cost of this disease is second only to cancer and higher than heart disease.
- 8.) **False.** Events may trigger depression, but research shows that victims have an imbalance of brain chemicals known as neurotransmitters. The imbalance produces serious and persistent symptoms such as changes in sleep, appetite and energy, thinking and decision making skills, and increased feelings of irritability, guilt, and despair.
- 9.) **False.** Family and friends can learn more about the disease, speak openly about it, implement actions suggested by leading mental health professionals and organizations, and help those they love to get the help they need.
- 10.) **True.** Like other illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, depression can be treated and controlled. Those who suffer from depression work and succeed in every field of work and play. The true opposite of depression is vitality which is clearly exhibited by those who seek and engage in treatment.

Quiz courtesy of the International Foundation for Research and Education on Depression

www.ifred.org