

Adult Depression

What: Depression is more than just feeling “sad” or “blue” for a few days. It is a serious mental illness that involves the brain and interferes with daily life.

Facts: According to a recent article in the Herald Dispatch (11/28/07) WV is ranked 2nd in the nation for depression and has the 10th highest suicide rate. Researches attributed these rates to poor access to mental health care, lack of health insurance and less than 17% of the population having a college degree. Other professionals believe people with serious problems never seek treatment and that the rural geographic are a deterrent to people, who must travel long distances, in need of appropriated health care.

Women and Depression:

- Express feelings of sadness, worthlessness and/or excessive guilt
- After giving birth may experience hormonal changes and added responsibility of a newborn
- May experience premenstrual dysphoric disorder due to hormonal changes
- The menopause transition may cause an increase in depression
- Feel the stress of home, work, children, aging parents and/or relationship issues

Men and Depression:

- May acknowledge feelings of fatigue and irritability
- Show signs of loss in pleasurable activities – including sex
- Likely to experience sleep disturbances
- More likely to turn to alcohol or drugs
- May become frustrated, discouraged, irritable, angry and sometime abusive
- Tend to bury themselves in work to avoid family and friends
- May engage in reckless or risky behavior

Signs and symptoms:

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- Low self esteem and increased feeling of guilt and or helplessness
- Increased irritability, anger, restless or hostility
- Decreased interest in activities or hobbies once enjoyed, including sex
- Persistent fatigue, low energy/motivation
- Poor concentration, remembering detail and indecision or forgetfulness
- Insomnia, early – morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Major change in eating, overeating or loss of appetite
- Thoughts or expressions of suicide or self destructive behavior
- Persistent physical illnesses such as aches and pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not ease with treatment
- Social isolation
- Drug or alcohol abuse

Seeking Help: If you believe an adult could be suffering from depression, assist them in making an appointment with a qualified mental health professional that can assess their needs. You can also call the National Association for Mental Illness help line at 800-950-6264 or go to their web site at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>. Offer the adult emotional support, understanding, patience and encouragement.