

Depression

Depression affects approximately 19 million Americans, or 9.5 percent of the population in any given one-year period.

All of us can get the blues from time to time. The sad feeling that occurs when we're going through a stressful life experience can be difficult, but sadness will lessen with time. Mental depression, however, is more intense, of longer duration, and can significantly interfere with how you feel, the way you think and act. Millions of Americans are estimated to suffer with depression—affecting nearly twice as many women as men. Fortunately, depression is very treatable.

Depression can affect anyone at anytime. Sometimes a life event will trigger it. Other times, the cause may not be entirely clear. Several factors can play a role in the onset of depression:

- **Biochemistry:** abnormalities in serotonin and norepinephrine, two chemicals in the brain linked with symptoms of depression.
- **Genetics:** depression can be hereditary.
- **Personality:** people with low self esteem, those easily overwhelmed by stress, or people generally pessimistic appear to be more prone to depression.
- **Environmental Factors:** those who are continuously exposed to violence, neglect, abuse or poverty are also susceptible to depression.
- **Health Condition:** depression can be a symptom or result of a medical condition.

Symptoms of Depression

- Changes in appetite that result in weight gain or loss unrelated to dieting
- Insomnia or oversleeping
- Loss of energy or increased fatigue
- Restlessness or irritability
- Feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide or attempts of suicide

Depression can be treated successfully for many with assistance from outside resources. Before a treatment plan is recommended, you should be evaluated for specific symptoms, medical and family history, cultural settings and environmental factors.

Seek immediate help if you:

- are thinking about suicide.
- are experiencing severe mood swings.
- think your depression is related to other problems that require professional help.
- think you would feel better if you talked with someone.
- don't feel in control enough to handle things yourself.

To contact UW Carelink Faculty & Staff Assistance Program, please call: 866-598-3978 or visit www.apshelplink.com (company code: UW)

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