

DEPRESSION:

Feeling Down, You're Not Alone

By Deborah Ardolf, ND

Depression is something that most everyone experiences at one time or another in their lifetime. Most are able to overcome it. It is a passing feeling. However, 5% of the populations (15 million people) are depressed at any given time making depression as common as the winter cold! Feeling better already? Read on...

The incidence and severity of depression increases dramatically during the holiday season which tells us there is an emotional trigger that may set the negative mood in place or is it diet related??? Also we know women are twice more likely to suffer from depression than men. Hormones? A new phenomenon that has begun to occur is earlier onset of depression. Are you in one of these categories? See you are not alone!!

Not everyone experiences depression the same way....

Melancholia

Hippocrates described what he called "melancholia" in the fifth century B.C. and it is still what most of us think when we hear the word "depression." The classic picture is somebody doing well in life who then becomes depressed for seemingly no reason. Their symptoms may include;

- Loss of interest in doing things they normally enjoyed
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of weight without trying
- Loss of sleep
- Agitation
- Restlessness
- Repetitive negative thoughts that is not responsive to reasoning.

Melancholic depression typically appears from age 30 and on. However, it is not uncommon to see the symptoms begin in the teen years! Recently I had a 14 year old patient who would be described as severe depression as she preferred to be alone in her room despite having great friends and suffer from thoughts of suicide. Thankfully, these symptoms changed after one week of treatment! She no longer had thoughts of suicide and instead convinced her parents to buy her a bike. She now enjoys riding it with her friends and family members.

The traditional treatment for people with severe melancholic depression includes a class of drugs called Tricyclic antidepressants (TCA). Responses to anti-depressive medications are highly individualized. Some patients report a positive difference in their mood while others have a reverse reaction causing an increased suicide risk. Adolescents seem to be especially vulnerable to this paradoxical reaction. Others report receiving a temporary benefit from the medication but then it seems to stop working! These patients either are prescribed an increase in their dose or another drug to add to the original one.

Atypical depression

Atypical depression is the most common form of depression. It tends to be early onset, chronic, non-episodic, and characterized by;

- Over eating

- Over sleeping
- Extreme lethargy
- Over reaction to life events, that tends to linger far beyond the event that seemingly started the downslide.

Traditionally, people who fit this classification were prescribed a class of drugs called Monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors. However, do to the severe and often deadly side effects and host of drug interactions, most doctors now prescribe a class of drugs call Selective Serotonin Uptake Inhibitors (SSRI's) or TCA's instead. The SSRI's have their host of problems too with drug interactions and a wearing off of the effectiveness with time.

As a naturopathic physician, instead of trying to suppress a feeling, we will look deeper into the cause of that feeling. Is it seasonal? If so, what season? Does it occur every month? When did it start? etc. Given the information above and more I will determine the appropriate course of treatment. For the 14 year old I mentioned earlier, it was a simple homeopathic remedy that did the trick. Not expensive and no drugs for life are required!

If you have been on prescription medication, we often have to undo the damage those drugs have done to the brain or more specifically to the neurotransmitter receptors. This will require more intense yet short lived treatment to correct.

Natural medicine has many options for those who suffer from depression. From food as medicine, to homeopathy, to botanical medicine, to hormone regulation, to IV medicine, we have you covered.

No one needs to live your life without hope!