

Sadness or Depression (Depressive Disorders)

How to tell the difference?

Feelings of sadness are common and a normal part of life. However, depressive disorder is far more serious than temporary sadness or sadness stemming from uncomplicated grief.

Depressive Disorders

Depressive disorders are among the most common mental health disorders in the United States (SAMSHA, 2015). They are characterized by a sad, hopeless, empty, or irritable mood, and somatic and cognitive changes that significantly interfere with daily life (SAMSHA, 2015). This group of disorders includes, but is not limited to, Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia), and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder. This document will focus on MDD and Dysthymia.

Facts about Depressive Disorders

- Individuals diagnosed with depressive disorders are at an increased risk for suicide.
- MDD is defined as having a depressed mood for most of the day and a marked loss of interest or pleasure, among other symptoms present nearly every day for at least a two-week period (SAMSHA, 2015).
 - In children and adolescents, MDD may manifest as an irritable rather than a sad disposition (SAMSHA, 2015).
 - Suicidal thoughts or plans can occur during an episode of major depression, which can require immediate attention (to be connected to a skilled, trained counselor at a local crisis center, people can call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) anytime 24/7) (SAMSHA, 2015).
 - The [2014 NSDUH data](#) showed that the prevalence of Major Depressive Episode (MDE) among adolescents aged 12 to 17 was 11.4% in 2014, while female youths were about three times as likely as male youths to experience a MDE (SAMSHA, 2015).
 - MDD is thought to have many possible causes, including genetic, biological, and environmental factors (SAMSHA, 2015).
 - Adverse childhood experiences and stressful life experiences are known to contribute to risk for MDD. In addition, those with closely related family members (for example, parents or siblings) who are diagnosed with the disorder are at increased risk (SAMSHA, 2015).
- Dysthymic disorder, also called dysthymia, involves long-term (two years or longer) less severe symptoms that do not disable, but keep one from functioning normally or from feeling good. (Psychology Today, 2015).

Treatment

Depression, even the most severe cases, can be treated. The earlier that treatment can begin, the more effective it is. Depression is usually treated with medications, psychotherapy, or a combination of the two (NIMH, 2015).

- Medication
 - Antidepressants are medicines that treat depression. They may help improve the way your brain uses certain chemicals that control mood or stress (NIMH, 2015).
- Psychotherapy
 - Several types of psychotherapy (also called “talk therapy” or, in a less specific form, counseling) can help people with depression. Examples of evidence-based approaches specific to the treatment of depression include cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), interpersonal therapy (IPT), and problem-solving therapy (NIMH, 2015).

Additional Information

For additional information visit: <http://www.samhsa.gov/disorders/mental - depressive>
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml - part 145399>