

National Depression Screening Day - 2008

More than 20 million Americans over the age of 18 suffer from depression³. Most people never seek treatment for their symptoms. Untreated depression can last for years and cause much suffering.

Douglas Jacobs, a clinical psychiatry professor at Harvard Medical School, started National Depression Screening Day in 1991. This day raises awareness and educates the public about the symptoms and treatment of depression. It also encourages people to be screened for depression, and connects those in need of treatment with the appropriate doctors¹.

National Depression Screening Day 2008 is on October 10th!

Why screen for depression?

- Depression affects people of all ages, races, and socioeconomic groups.
- Two-thirds of people suffering from depression do not seek treatment for their symptoms.
- One in four women and one in ten men will experience depression sometime in their life.
- Depression is a serious medical illness that can lead to suicide.
- Depression can complicate other medical conditions.
- Depression *can* be treated.
- Screenings for depression are often the first step in getting help.¹

Remember that a *depression screening is not a professional diagnosis*. Screenings can identify the presence or absence of symptoms. They also provide a referral for further evaluation if needed.¹

Should I be screened for depression?

If you're experiencing any of the following common signs of depression, consider a screening and/or a visit to your doctor:

- Feelings of sadness or emptiness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in most activities
- Appetite and weight changes (increase or decrease)
- Feelings of mental/physical slowness or agitation
- Feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, or guilt
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleep disturbances (sleeping less or more than usual)
- Thoughts of death/suicide

The pattern of symptoms of depression can be different for everyone. Perhaps you've heard terms such as:

- Major Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Dysthymia
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
- Postpartum Depression.

These are all types of depression. A doctor may recommend treatment or refer you to a mental health professional.

Diagnosing and Treating Depression

Although there is no one test doctors use to diagnose depression, there are common features. The first step is to see your doctor for an exam. They can determine if your depression is caused by an underlying medical condition..

Your doctor may refer you to a behavioral health professional for an evaluation. Behavioral health professionals carry varying degrees. You might see the initials MA, MS, LMFT, LMHC, PhD, PsyD, EDD, or RN behind the names of the professionals you see. Therapists, psychologists, and counselors receive education in the field of psychology and social work, and are licensed to offer therapeutic services.

Treatment may include antidepressants, therapy, or a combination of both. Just as everyone is different, everyone's treatment plan is different. Some people may need a few therapy sessions, while others may need more time to work through what has been troubling them. Some may take medications, while others may not. Your doctor and you will work together to decide which treatment is best for you.

Take advantage of October 10th, 2008 and take the first step toward achieving personal and mental wellness.

*To find a free, anonymous screening site in your area, visit
www.mentalhealthscreening.org/locator/NDSMap.aspx*

References:

1. Mental Health America (MHA). (2006). *National Depression Screening Day*. Retrieved September 12, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.nmha.org/index.cfm?objectid=DDAD50B5-1372-4D20-C869143B77A53916>
2. Mental Health Screening. *National Depression Screening Day*. Retrieved September 19, 2008 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/events/nds/index.aspx>
3. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (2000). *Depression*. Retrieved September 12, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm#ptdep1>

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