



DEPRESSION

Understanding the Disorder

Depression is no mere slump in mood. Unlike “the blues,” which tend to clear up in a few days, depression frequently is both prolonged and recurring. It can’t be ignored, and it can’t be joked or whistled away. Sufferers of depression are likely to experience:

- ☛ **prolonged loss of interest in home, work and personal appearance.**
- ☛ **loss of interest in sexual activity.**
- ☛ **sudden changes and excesses in eating or sleeping habits.**
- ☛ **frequent, uncontrollable crying.**
- ☛ **lingering, unfocused nervousness or grouchiness.**
- ☛ **persistent feelings of hopelessness and futility.**

There are both physical and psychological causes of depression. Illness and chemical imbalances are physical causes. Psychological or emotional causes include distressing or threatening changes—death of a loved one, divorce or loss of a job—and continuing problems of emotional dependency and inadequate self-esteem.

Untreated, depression can be debilitating and can lead to suicide. It’s a serious condition requiring serious treatment.

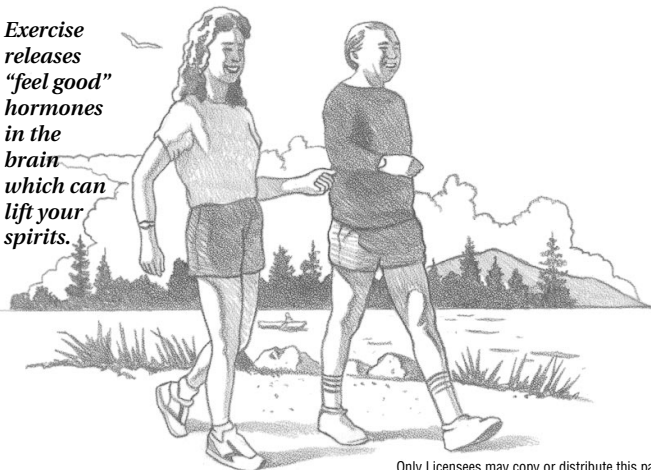
Treatment for Depression

If you suspect you suffer depression, having a medical checkup is your first step. Even depression with emotional causes may call for treatment with medication, and that’s a decision that must be made by a doctor who, in turn, must know the state of your physical health.

If your depression has a physical cause, treating the underlying illness may be the cure. Depression resulting from chemical imbalance can also be treated medically. Especially among elderly people, chance combinations of medications taken for various medical needs can produce depression. A doctor will want to get a complete list of all medicines you’ve been taking.

If your depression is traceable to an event or situation, professional counseling or therapy may be helpful. The doctor who does your physical checkup can refer you to a counselor or therapist.

Exercise releases “feel good” hormones in the brain which can lift your spirits.



Self-Care Tips

In addition to seeking professional help, there are some things you can do which may help you feel better. Follow a healthy, well rounded diet, and get regular exercise. Aerobic exercise, such as walking, bicycling and swimming, is recommended. Scientists theorize that such exercise releases “feel good” hormones in the brain which can lift your spirits and help you feel more optimistic and emotionally in control. Again, these are often beneficial, but they’re not an alternative to professional attention. Talk to a health professional.