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Your health in caring hands

DEPRESSION

What you need
to know

**BECAUSE....CARING
COMES NATURALLY TO US**

Are certain people more at risk of getting Depressed ?

Depression is extremely common and can affect men and women at any age, and of any educational level or social and economic background. Women are more likely to be affected than men.

Why should Depression be treated ?

Sadly depression often goes untreated. The trouble is that depression affects every aspect of the sufferer's life: their relationships, work, finances, parenting skills, marriages and more. Thereby affecting your children, partner and work colleges.

Cognitive dysfunction is also a recognised part of depression. Its impact on ones quality of life and ability to function professionally and socially can be very detrimental.

Cognitive symptoms are:

- + Slow thinking
- + Forgetfulness
- + Indecisiveness
- + Trouble concentrating

How is Depression treated ?

Your doctor would prescribe antidepressants, which help to restore the chemical imbalance. He may refer you to a psychologist or counsellor if it is clear that you could benefit by getting assistance in certain areas of your life. Empowering a person goes a long way to helping them cope better with life.

What is Depression ?

Most of us feel 'down' from time to time. This is a normal reaction to stress, or feeling hurt, or a life setback. Depression however is more than sadness. It is a real illness; a mood disorder characterised by feeling helpless, hopeless and worthless. The condition can develop slowly over time, or quickly. Depression can affect anyone, and thankfully it is treatable in most cases.

What causes Depression ?

Depression is sometimes caused by a number of factors. Here are some that could play a role:



Family History/Traumatic Childhood

Experiences: If other members of your family suffer from depression, as well as violence or other trauma as a child could put you at greater risk.



Events: Death of a loved one, relationship break-ups, life-threatening events, financial problems, unemployment, serious accidents, stress, certain medications and bullying may trigger depression.



Lifestyle: Excessive alcohol consumption, the use of recreational drugs, inadequate sleep, poor diet and lack of exercise may trigger depression.



Chemical Imbalance: A chemical imbalance in the brain is frequently seen in depressed individuals.



How is Depression diagnosed ?

Experts would commonly ask you a series of questions as a screening tool, to establish if you are depressed. Once you've shared your answers, the medical professional will discuss an appropriate form of treatment with you. (The Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale is commonly used, and it may be found at the following link: <https://psychology-tools.com/zung-depression-scale/>)

What are the other names for Depression ?

Depression is sometimes called major depression, major depressive disorder or unipolar depression. (It is unipolar because depressive moods do not alternate between 'high' periods and 'low' periods; rather, depression sufferers are consistently 'down' or 'low', to varying degrees. (Please refer to our leaflet on bipolar mood disorder to understand why depression in itself is essentially unipolar.)

Who to call for help:

SADAG: 0800 567 567 OR SMS 31393

(South African Anxiety and Depression Group)

LIFELINE: 0861 322 322

What are the symptoms of Depression?

The symptoms of depression vary in people, as does the frequency and intensity of those symptoms. They may include the following:

Symptoms

- + Finding it difficult to concentrate
- + Difficulty remembering details
- + It may be hard to make decisions
- + Feelings of hopelessness and negativity
- + Insomnia (disturbed sleep) or excessive sleeping
- + Constant fatigue
- + Irritability, restlessness or aggression
- + A feeling of being unable to cope
- + Loss of interest in sex and in things you use to enjoy doing
- + Avoiding interaction with other people
- + Overeating or loss of appetite
- + Headaches, stomach ache or other digestive problems
- + Being preoccupied with suicide or having suicidal thoughts

Are there any lifestyle changes I could make, to help or prevent Depression ?

It is important to find an outlet for stress, and to have someone to talk to. Identifying how expressing your feelings is an excellent way of coping with 'low' feelings. Eating healthily and getting adequate sleep are vital. Regular exercise helps release endorphins, which are the brain's feel-good hormones. Most importantly, if you are depressed, don't delay talking to your doctor. The sooner you get help, the better.

References: <http://www.depressionuk.org/depression.shtml>, <http://www.depressiontoolkit.org/aboutyourdiagnosis/depression.asp>; <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/what-is-depression?page=4>; <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>, <http://www.sadag.org/>

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