

You are worth it! Get treatment for depression

By Julie Kelso

Depression is a common, treatable illness. Financial stress, isolation, substance use and having chronic health conditions all increase the risk of developing depression.

Clinical depression is more than brief feelings of sadness. True clinical depression is sustained sadness or loss of interest or pleasure that lasts most of the day nearly every day for two weeks or more. Depression makes it harder to go to work and interact with family. Depression may interfere with concentration and may affect eating and sleeping habits.

Dial 988 or text 741-741

Sometimes, people with depression feel like life isn't worth living. They may have active thoughts of hurting or killing themselves.

If you have thoughts of suicide, reach out for help immediately. Tell a trusted family member or friend and call your family doctor. Go to a hospital emergency department if you feel unsafe. You can dial the suicide prevention hotline at 988 or text 741-741 on your phone 24/7 to talk with a person trained to assist with a mental health crisis.

If you think you might be suffering clinical depression, consult your primary care provider. At RiverStone Health Clinic, medical providers work with a team including mental health therapists to provide care for patients suffering from depression. When needed, they help patients make a safety plan to use in case of an emergency to prevent suicide.

Primary care providers, including family doctors, physician assistants and nurse practitioners, are trained to treat depression, anxiety and other mental disorders, including substance use disorders. If they determine that more specialized treatment is needed, they can make a referral to a psychiatrist or another mental health professional.

Treatment for depression usually involves counseling. Even short-term therapy can help patients focus on changing thinking and behavior and devise strategies to complete goals. Counseling can help change negative self-talk.

Good, basic self-care is part of treating depression: A healthy diet, sufficient sleep, physical activity, spending time outside, practicing mindfulness and making gratitude a habit all help. It is important not to spend too much time on negative social media or disturbing news. Instead, go for a walk or call a friend.

The treatment of moderate to severe depression often includes medication. Not everyone is going to need medication. This decision is between you and your medical provider. When people are prescribed daily medication for depression, they may see benefits within two weeks, but usually it takes several weeks to see maximum benefit.

Antidepressants can cause minor side effects, such as anxiety, headache and upset stomach. The side effects typically go away after a week or two. Talk to your doctor about what to expect and report any side effects that you experience.

Your healthcare provider may be a good source for finding the mental health counseling you need. Many employers offer an employee assistance program that can refer workers to short-term counseling and other services.

Medicaid and Medicare cover mental health as do private insurance plans. Many local healthcare organizations, including RiverStone Health, offer patient financial assistance based on income.

Remember: Depression is treatable. Ask for help to keep yourself safe. Positive habits, medication and professional counseling are all tools in the effective treatment of clinical depression.

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