

DEPRESSION

Unlike sadness or grief, depression is more severe, tends to last longer, and tends to interfere with one's ability to function adequately. If you have had five or more of the following symptoms for at least two weeks, you may be depressed:

- depressed mood nearly every day—sad, empty, tearful, crying spells
- decreased interest or loss of pleasure for most of the day for most days
- unintended weight loss or change in appetite
- sleep disturbance
- psychomotor agitation or retardation (restlessness/agitation or listlessness)
- fatigue or loss of energy
- feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach, guilt
- difficulty concentrating or making decisions thoughts of death or suicide

This symptom list is given only for your consideration of the possibility that you or someone you care about may be depressed and is not intended for a diagnosis of depression. If you think you may be depressed, you may wish to consult your physician or make an appointment to see a mental health professional for further evaluation. Major depression is one of several mood disorders that are treated effectively with a combination of medication and psychotherapy.

BIPOLAR DISORDERS

Like a major depressive episode, bipolar disorders are mood disorders. There are two types of bipolar disorders, known simply as Bipolar I and Bipolar II. Both bipolar disorders include the symptoms of depression as well as symptoms of mania or hypomania.

The symptoms of Bipolar I include a distinct period of time (at least one week in duration) in which an individual's mood is abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable. During this time the individual may have inflated self esteem, decreased need for sleep, and may be more talkative than usual or feel a pressure to keep talking. This individual may feel like ideas and thoughts are coming so rapidly that he has trouble expressing everything. He may also be distractible, try to do too many things too quickly, or engage in activities that have the potential for harmful consequences. The symptoms are severe enough to cause marked impairment in functioning or necessitate hospitalization.

The symptoms of Bipolar II are like those of Bipolar I except in degree of impairment in functioning, with no necessity of hospitalization. Many mental health professionals have come to believe that this disorder is far more prevalent than once thought.

If you think you may have a bipolar disorder, you may wish to consult your physician or see a mental health professional for further evaluation. Treatment can involve both psychotherapy and medical management (usually by a psychiatrist).