



HEALTH AWARENESS

Combating Depression



(NAPSA)—Nearly 20 million Americans suffer from depression. The good news is that depression—even when it’s chronic or debilitating—can be treated successfully.

In fact, more than 80 percent of people who seek treatment for depression show measurable improvement. Sadly, many people resist treatment because they are embarrassed to admit their despondency.

They should know that they are not alone. Depression is the most common mental illness, affecting as many as one in every 20 adults and one in every 10 children and teens.

Depression can occur in anyone, and can be triggered by a traumatic experience or it can develop gradually over time. Often it strikes for no obvious reason.

The first step toward treating depression is identifying it. Typi-

cal symptoms of depression include:

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” moods
- Sleeping too much, too little or just plain tossing and turning
- Reduced or increased appetite that leads to weight loss or weight gain
- Loss of pleasure and interest in once enjoyable activities
- Restlessness, irritability and persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment such as chronic pain or digestive disorders
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Noticeable fatigue or loss of energy
- Thoughts of suicide or death

While not everyone with depression will have all these symptoms, one or more often are tell-tale signs. If you or someone you know spot any of these symptoms, don’t hesitate to see a doctor.

Treatment for depression varies with each individual. The most common types of treatment are talk therapy, antidepressant medication, or a combination of these two options.

Close attention must be paid to any treatment regimen for depression. Careful monitoring by a doctor or caregiver, and the individual undergoing treatment is important to knowing whether the treatment is working or whether a different one should be tried.

Treating depression takes time, but it can be controlled to the point where patients can enjoy life. Leaving depression unnoticed and untreated, however, is a risk.

Remember, identifying depression and taking positive action is the first step on the path to getting it under control and, perhaps, even curing it.

Learning More About Your Symptoms Can Help You Improve

Families for Depression Awareness, a non-profit mental health organization, offers a confidential mood questionnaire on their website to help you determine whether you may have a mood disorder.

The group has also worked with clinicians to develop an Adult Depression Monitoring Toolkit, which helps patients and their families keep track of day-to-day emotions and behaviors. This can better inform health care providers about whether treatment is working and can also provide warning signs if a depressed patient is feeling suicidal.

For more information, or to get the kit, go to www.familyaware.org or call (781) 890-0220.

