



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Depression: What Every Woman Should Know

(NAPSA)—Everyone experiences periods of feeling sad, lonely, or unhappy. When such feelings linger for weeks or months or interfere with your ability to function, you may be suffering from depression. Depression affects 19 million Americans—and though it can occur in both men and women, some forms appear to be twice as likely in women.

The specific causes of depression in women remain unclear. Many factors are suspected to play a role in developing depression. Research is focused on understanding these factors, including reproductive, hormonal, genetic or other biological factors; abuse and oppression; interpersonal factors; and certain psychological and personality characteristics.

“What is clear is that regardless of the contributing factors, depression is a highly treatable illness,” said Rite Aid Pharmacist Sarah Matunis, R.Ph. “As with any illness, the earlier treatment begins, the more effective and the greater the likelihood of preventing serious recurrences. The first step should be a thorough examination to rule out physical illnesses that may cause depressive symptoms.”

Medical problems, such as thyroid disease, can cause depression, which is why a physical examination and medical workup should be conducted before a diagnosis can be confirmed.

“Approximately 10 to 15 percent of those diagnosed with depression may have a thyroid hormone deficiency. Patients with depression should be tested to determine if they have thyroid disorder,” added Matunis.

The most common treatments for depression are antidepressant medications, psychotherapy, or a combination of the two.

There are several types of antidepressant medications used to treat depressive disorder. These include newer medications—mainly the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), tricyclics (TCAs) and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs). Each acts on different chemical pathways of the human brain related



Medication can be used to help treat depression, a condition common in women.

to moods. SSRIs such as Prozac®, Zoloft®, Paxil® and Luvox® have fewer side effects and have been found to be particularly useful and effective in women patients.

According to Matunis, Rite Aid Pharmacists are specially trained to work closely with a patient's doctor to provide a thorough review of treatment options and address any questions a patient may have about medications and possible side effects.

“Although some individuals notice improvement in the first couple of weeks, usually antidepressant medications must be taken for four weeks and, in some cases up to eight weeks, before the full therapeutic effect occurs,” said Matunis. “To be effective and to prevent a relapse of depression, medications should be taken for about six to 12 months, carefully following a doctor's instructions. Medication must be monitored to ensure the most effective dosage and to minimize side effects.”

Research continues to explore how depression affects women. At the same time, it is important for women to increase their awareness of what is already known about depression, so they can seek early and appropriate treatment.

For more information on treatments for depression or to find the location of the nearest Rite Aid Pharmacist, visit www.riteaid.com.