

Teens and Depression

Many of us, when we hear the word “depression,” can relate it to a time in our lives when we’ve felt deeply sad. Loss of a loved one, a break-up in a relationship or problems at school or work may all be contributing factors to feeling depressed for a short time period. Feeling sad is a normal emotion that all of us have felt at one time or another. The question is when does regular sadness become depression? Depression is diagnosed when sad, or sometimes just angry, feelings are so intense that they get in the way of day to day functioning. Depression is actually the most commonly diagnosed mental illness. Research suggests that up to 20 percent of all teens will experience depression at some time.

Along with sad or angry mood, there are other important signs and symptoms that go along with a diagnosis of depression. Common symptoms of depression include:

- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Changes in appetite
- Low energy
- Pulling away from friends and activities that are usually enjoyable
- Feelings of guilt
- Hopelessness
- Low self-esteem
- Thoughts of suicide

Sometimes there is a specific event that triggers an episode of depression, but it is important to know that many teens with depression can’t identify a reason for their sadness. Substance abuse and depression are often linked, and a person may turn to addictive substances in an attempt to feel better. Unfortunately many substances, including alcohol, have negative effects on mood long-term, and the result is that the depression only gets worse.

Fortunately, there is help available. Depression is one of the most treatable types of mental illness in America. A treatment plan of antidepressant medication, psychotherapy, or a combination of both, is successful in helping depressed adolescents feel better.

Depression is a common illness, but should always be taken seriously. Sadness is something we all endure, but if your emotions are feeling out of control and interfering with your daily life, please seek professional help. If a friend or family member has shown signs of depression or communicated an emotional problem to you, encourage him or her to seek help. With treatment, it is truly possible to feel healthier and happier.



The Acadia Hospital offers rapid access to a wide array of services for youth living with depression. To schedule an evaluation please call 1-800-640-1211 or 973-6100.

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