

Understanding Depression

WHAT IS DEPRESSION- Depression is a mental disorder that is marked by a sad, empty or hopeless mood that is present almost every day and lasts most of the day for at least two weeks or more. Everyone feels sad or stressed from time to time. However, the feelings associated with depression are far more intense and longer lasting. Feelings of significant depression usually interfere with day-to-day activities with your family, school, work, or other social situations.

Causes- Researchers and health care professionals do not completely understand the causes of depression. It is unlikely that a single factor causes depression. It is most likely caused by a combination of genetics (i.e., family history of someone having depression), chemical changes in the brain, and/or environmental factors. Traumatic experiences can also add to the development of mental disorders. If you have experienced a traumatic event, it is important to share that information with your counselor and/or health care provider.

Knowing warning signs and symptoms- Many people don't even realize that they are suffering from depression. However, there are warning signs that may help you know if you have it. These include irritability, loss of appetite, risky behavior, fatigue, and insomnia, lack of concentration, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, a sudden and inexplicable improvement in mood. Be on the lookout for any of these warnings and if present speak to your doctor.

What to expect- When speaking with your doctor about your symptoms expect to learn more about your condition, treatment and support your PCHC clinic team provides you. You will get phone calls and text messages from pharmacists to check in on you and help keep you on track with your medications!

Depression during COVID-19- Infectious diseases such as the coronavirus can cause a great deal of emotional distress. Feeling stressed, confused, overwhelmed or powerless is normal during these uncertain times. Recognizing how often and intense you're feelings are, is important so you can ask for help.

Treatment Options- There are several treatment options nowadays. Depression can be best managed by one or more of the following most common interventions: medication(s), behavioral therapy, and family or peer support. Treatment decisions should be made by speaking to your provider and finding which one fits best to your goals.

Medications- The typical course of treatment for depression initially begins with therapy with a counselor. After a few months, your doctor may prescribe a medication such as: Fluoxetine, Citalopram, Paroxetine or Sertraline among others. Medications can help relieve and prevent the recurrence of symptoms of depression/anxiety. Each person reacts differently to these medications. For this reason, your doctor may recommend different types or dosages of medication before finding the most effective treatment for you. These medications must be taken consistently (daily) for them to be effective. Be open with your prescriber about your substance use. It can take several weeks for you to feel an improvement in your mood so be patient. Antidepressant medications may cause a wide range of side effects including: nausea, dizziness, agitation, irritability, anxiety, fatigue, drowsiness, nausea, difficulty sleeping, loss of sexual desire, erectile dysfunction, constipation, diarrhea, blurry vision, dry mouth among others. If you experience any side effects be sure to share the information with your doctor.

Here are some coping tips to help you manage some of these feelings:

- * Set a limit when watching any media including: social media, local or national news.
- * Stay active and be sure to get enough sleep.
- Stay hydrated. Avoid excessive amount of caffeine or alcohol. Eat healthy foods.
- * Connect with love ones and others who may be experiencing stress about the outbreak.
- * Talk about your feelings and enjoy conversations unrelated to the outbreak.