

EHC NEWSLETTER
September/October 2008

Depression

Depression is a serious medical condition. In contrast to the normal emotional experiences of sadness, loss or passing mood states, clinical depression is persistent and can interfere significantly with an individual's ability to function. There are three main types of depressive disorders: major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, and bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness)

Symptoms and Types of Depression

Symptoms of depression include sad mood, loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyed, change in appetite or weight, difficulty sleeping or oversleeping, physical slowing or agitation, energy loss, feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt, difficulty thinking or concentrating, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide. A diagnosis of major depressive disorder is made if a person has 5 or more of these symptoms and impairment in usual functioning nearly every day during the same two-week period. Major depression often begins between ages 15 to 30 but also can appear in children. Episodes typically recur.

Some people have a chronic but less severe form of depression, called dysthymic disorder, which is diagnosed when depressed mood persists for at least 2 years (1 year in children) and is accompanied by at least 2 other symptoms of depression. Many people with dysthymia develop major depressive episodes.

Episodes of depression also occur in people with bipolar disorder. In this disorder, depression alternates with mania, which is characterized by abnormally and persistently elevated mood or irritability and symptoms including overly-inflated self-esteem, decreased need for sleep, increased talkativeness, racing thoughts, distractibility, physical agitation, and excessive risk taking.

Because bipolar disorder requires different treatment than major depressive disorder or dysthymia, obtaining an accurate diagnosis is extremely important.

Facts About Depression

- Major depression is the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and worldwide.
- Depressive disorders affect an estimated 9.5 percent of adult Americans ages 18 and over in a given year.
- Nearly twice as many women (12 percent) as men (7 percent) are affected by a depressive disorder each year.

Depression can be devastating to family relationships, friendships and the ability to work or go to school. Many people still believe that the emotional symptoms caused by depression are "not real," and that a person should be able to shake off the symptoms. Because of these inaccurate beliefs, people with depression either may not recognize that they have a treatable disorder or may be discouraged from seeking or staying on treatment due to feelings of shame and stigma. Too often, untreated or inadequately treated depression is associated with suicide.

Treatments

Antidepressant medications are widely used, effective treatments for depression. Existing antidepressants influence the functioning of certain chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. The newer medications, such as the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (S-S-R-Is), tend to have fewer side effects than the older drugs, which include tricyclic antidepressants (T-C-As) and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (M-A-O-Is). Although both generations of medications are effective in relieving depression, some people will respond to one type of drug, but not another. Other types of antidepressants are now in development.

Certain types of psychotherapy, specifically cognitive-behavioral therapy (C-B-T) and interpersonal therapy (I-P-T), have been found helpful for depression. Research indicates that mild to moderate depression often can be treated successfully with either therapy alone; however, severe depression appears more likely to respond to a combination of psychotherapy and medication. More than 80 percent of people with depressive disorders improve when they receive appropriate treatment.

In situations where medication, psychotherapy and the combination of these interventions prove ineffective, or work too slowly to relieve severe symptoms such as psychosis (e.g., hallucinations, delusional thinking) or suicidality, electroconvulsive therapy (E-C-T) may be considered. E-C-T is a highly-effective treatment for severe depressive episodes. The possibility of long-lasting memory problems, although a concern in the past, has been significantly reduced with modern E-C-T techniques. However, the potential benefits and risks of E-C-T, and of available alternative interventions, should

be carefully reviewed and discussed with individuals considering this treatment and, where appropriate, with family or friends.

One herbal supplement, hypericum or St. John's wort, has been promoted as having antidepressant properties.

There is evidence that St. John's wort can reduce the effectiveness of certain medications; use of any herbal or natural supplements should always be discussed with your doctor before they are tried.

COUNTY FAIR

It's that time of year again! The Baxter County Fair is September 9 - 13. Check in for the general public is Tuesday, September 9, from 2:00 until 7:00 p.m. There will also be an early check-in for exhibitors with 10 or more items, fair volunteers and EHC members on Sunday, September 7, from 2:00 until 4:00. Judging will be Wednesday, September 10, with the gates opening at 5:00 p.m. Check out will be Sunday, September 14, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. and Monday, September 15, from 8:00 a.m. until noon.

PRESIDENT'S DAY

The Ozark District AEHC President's Day will be Tuesday, October 21, in Clarksville. Any interested EHC member is encouraged to attend with lunch costing \$10. We must send in our registration by Wednesday, October 8.

T-shirts can also be ordered before October 1 and picked up during the meeting.

WALK ACROSS ARKANSAS

Walk Across Arkansas will begin on September 28. Start a healthy habit! Enjoy a little friendly competition! Get fit! Have fun! Walk Across Arkansas is a fun and flexible way to exercise. Just get together with several other people—friends, neighbors, coworkers or family members—and start walking, jogging or even biking.

You can walk together or individually, outside, at a mall or a gym or any way that fits your schedule and lifestyle.

You keep track of your miles, to see if you can walk to 300 miles "Across Arkansas" in 8 weeks. Report your totals to your county Extension office to see how your team "measures up" against others in your town. And by the end of Walk Across Arkansas, you'll have a healthy habit that will last a lifetime!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 1	-	Labor Day
September 7	-	Early check-in at the Fair
September 9	-	Fair check-in
September 10	-	Fair judging
September 14&15	-	Fair check-out
September 21	-	District Fair check-in
September 22	-	District Fair judging
September 24	-	Board meeting
September 28	-	District Fair check-out
October 10	-	Body Walk
October 14	-	Fall Council
October 20	-	Fair Volunteer Appreciation Dinner
October 21	-	AEHC Ozark District President's Day
October 29	-	Board meeting
November 7	-	Project books due to Tanya
December 6	-	Cookie Can Sale

See you at the Fair!

Tanya Yates,
County Extension Agent-FCS

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating.

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