

# Depression

*"Physical pain is a sign something ain't right.*

*Mental pain, in my opinion, is the exact same thing."*

Robert Whitaker, Author of *Anatomy of an Epidemic* and Pulitzer Prize Nominee

Mental and emotional problems can interfere with one's life in every aspect. Depressive disorders are associated with poor work activity, disrupted sleeping patterns, bad eating habits, and can put a toll on family units and social life. Anxiety and stress have become acceptable diseases of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, linked to fast lifestyles and demanding jobs. More than 1 in 20 Americans are depressed, according to the most recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and 20% of adults will suffer from some type of mood disorder that requires treatment over their lifetime<sup>1</sup>.

The diagnostic criterion for depression is set forth by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition as follows....

*Depressed moods or loss of interest or pleasure most of the time for 2 weeks plus 4 or more of the following:*

- **Sleep:** Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day
- **Interest:** Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in nearly all activities most of the time
- **Guilt:** Excessive or inappropriate feelings of guilt or worthlessness most of the time
- **Energy:** Loss of energy or fatigue most of the time
- **Concentration:** Diminished ability to think or concentrate; indecisiveness most of the time
- **Appetite:** Increase or decrease in appetite
- **Psychomotor:** Observed psychomotor agitation/retardation
- **Suicide:** Recurrent thoughts of death/suicidal ideation

According to the *Canadian Medical Journal*, there are often errors in the diagnosis or treatment of the disease, and only 33 percent of patients receive proper treatment. Errors may be associated with insufficient questioning which leads to failure to receive enough information from the patient to give a proper diagnosis. Appropriate psychological therapies for patients are unavailable and most of the time antidepressant drugs are prescribed for therapies. In fact, the number of Americans taking antidepressants *doubled* in a decade, from 13.3 million in 1996 to 27 million in 2005.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the extensive list of side effects that accompany antidepressants, there have been multiple research studies done concluding that antidepressants seem to work no better than sugar pills! For example, according to the psychology researchers Irving Kirsch and Guy Sapirstein of the University of Connecticut, patients placed on a placebo (a mock pill) improved 75%. In other words, three quarters of the benefit from antidepressants seems to be a placebo effect.

It has even been suggested that some people might need several antidepressants to respond to treatment. However, it may take 12-14 weeks to reach full effect. The staff at Mayo Clinic quoted this process as "trial and error" along with survey findings that found 80% of general practitioners know they are overprescribing antidepressant drugs.<sup>3</sup>

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More serious health problems associated with the use of antidepressant medications have been noted. These include diseases such as diabetes, immune dysfunction, stillbirths, brittle bones, stroke and death. The National Institute of Mental Health quotes, "Research over the past two decades has shown that depression is an important risk factor for heart disease along with high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure."

Depression can be caused by numerous factors. However, much of depression is regulated by a part of the brain that governs mood. The brain's behavior is influenced by what we provide it. Being able to control symptoms like anxiety, apathy, fears, and feelings of worthlessness depends on the environment we provide. There are other natural ways to consider that can help alleviate depression. These strategies have nothing but positive effects and are inexpensive to implement.

1. Getting regular exercise can help overcome depression by normalizing hormones. Dr. James Gordon, MD, a world renowned expert in using mind-body medicine to heal depression states that "exercise is at least as good as antidepressants for helping people who are depressed...physical exercise changes the levels of serotonin in the brain, and increases your "feel good" hormones".<sup>1</sup>
2. Eat a well-balanced diet. Serotonin is a chemical in the brain that helps maintain positive feelings, sleep, and calmness. Serotonin release is triggered by eating carbohydrates followed by insulin spikes. Consumption of protein must accompany a carbohydrate meal to promote production of another chemical, dopamine, which promotes alertness for balance. Eating carbohydrates alone seems to have a calming effect, while proteins increase alertness. A balance of most desirable sources of proteins, carbohydrates and fats is essential. For more information on this topic, visit our website newsletter archives and read "Eating Clean" December 2009.
3. Avoid stimulants such as coffee, liquor and soda. These may give you a rush of energy at first, but will eventually wear off when your blood sugar levels drop along with your energy.
4. Omega 3 Fatty Acids. DHA is one of the Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish and your brain is dependant on it. This fatty acid cannot be made by the body so we need them from dietary sources. Low DHA levels have been linked to depression, memory loss and Alzheimer's.
5. Vitamin D. Getting safe sun exposure is great for your mood. Multiple studies show that those who are deficient in Vitamin D are more prone to depression. Supplementing with a high quality vitamin D is recommended when sun exposure is limited. Of course, getting the 25-Hydroxy Vitamin D blood test will help you know exactly how much YOU need to supplement.
6. Vitamin C is required for important conversions of amino acids that control the brain's chemical messengers.

Don't know where to start? Getting a thorough blood work-up and toxic element testing will shed light on dietary changes you need to make, target areas you may need to supplement and help to objectively monitor your progress.

If you or someone you know is feeling depressed, or have any thoughts of suicide call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, a toll free number at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or call 911.

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## References:

1. Dr. Mercola, Joseph, Please Don't Visit This Type of Doctor Unless You Absolutely Have to. [www.articles.mercola.com](http://www.articles.mercola.com). March 2011. Accessed on October 10, 2011
2. Begley, Sharon. The Depressing News About Antidepressants. The Newsweek/Daily Beast. January, 28, 2010
3. Boseley, Sarah. Doctors 'forced' to overprescribe antidepressants. Guardian News and Media Limited. March 29, 2004

Federal Law requires that we warn you of the following:

1. Your individual health status and any required health care treatments can only be properly addressed by a professional healthcare provider of your choice. Remember: There is no adequate substitution for a personal consultation with your chosen health care provider. Therefore, we encourage you to make your own health care decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified health care professional.

2. The Constitution guarantees you the right to be your own physician and to prescribe for your own health.