

SINAI HEALTH LINK

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HEALTH LINK

1-888-AT-SINAI (1-888-287-4624)

DEPRESSED? THERE'S HOPE AND HELP

Sadness isn't just a mood. Sometimes it's a sign of depression, a common illness.

Depression may include problems everyone has now and then. You're tired. You can't think clearly. You forget things. You sleep too much. You can't sleep when you should. Things you usually enjoy – hobbies, friends and family, even sex – take too much effort. You feel hopeless.

If you've felt like that for a few weeks or more, or if sadness keeps you from working and caring for your family, you may be depressed. Fortunately, doctors can easily treat depression in most people.

Depression strikes both men and women, but it's more common in women. It can happen at any age. It occurs in both healthy and sick people. Often, it goes along with drug abuse, drinking, heart disease, stroke, cancer or Alzheimer's disease. It even affects kids. Alfreda Grosrenaud, MD, a psychiatrist at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago, has seen depression in children as young as 2½.

Depression can be triggered by major life changes – divorce, death of a loved one, job loss, or moving to a new place. The main cause, though, is an incorrect mix of brain chemicals. These chemicals tell your brain what you see and feel, and how to react. When the balance isn't right, everything may seem wrong. You don't know what to do. You feel helpless.

Drugs called antidepressants correct the balance, usually with only minor side effects. Your doctor can tell if one is right for you.

Antidepressants may be only half the treatment. The other half is talk therapy – psychotherapy.

Dr. Grosrenaud says a therapist asks about your life and feelings. Your answers let the therapist see how you dealt with feelings before. Together, you and the therapist will figure out better ways to react to what's going on in your life now.

Therapy can help you think clearly about your problems, while an antidepressant can make you feel well enough to solve them. Some people cure their depression with just a few hours of therapy and a few months of drug treatment. Others need antidepressant drugs and therapy for years.

Either way, you can work with your doctor to get back on track and happy again.

If you think you're depressed, call 1-888-AT-SINAI (1-888-287-4624) to see a Sinai doctor.



SOME SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- You don't sleep well, or you sleep too much.
- You lose interest in things you used to enjoy.
- You feel worthless.
- You forget things.
- You eat too much, or too little.
- You get headaches or stomach pains.
- You feel nervous.
- You get angry over little things.
- You don't want to be with people.
- Your mood is hurting your work.
- You feel sad for weeks or more.

**FOR OTHER HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AT SINAI HEALTH SYSTEM,
CALL 1-888-AT-SINAI OR (773) 257-6289 (TTY).**

HELP YOURSELF THROUGH A DEPRESSION

Until your treatment helps, some simple things can make you feel better:

- Exercise every day, even if it's just a walk around the block. At first, you may feel tired, but soon you will have more energy.
- Try yoga. Its graceful stretching and controlled breathing help calm you.
- Only do things that are really important. Doing too much can make you feel like giving up.



- Spend time with people, especially those who understand you're not your usual self.
- Realize that some people don't understand depression. Don't feel bad when they tell you to "snap out of it."

Ask your Sinai doctor

- Q.** I've heard of people taking an herb called St. John's wort for depression. Is this a good idea?
- A.** St. John's wort and other herbal treatments are for sale without a prescription. However, most doctors wouldn't recommend them, because little research has been done on them, or on what happens when someone takes more than one.

"We don't know enough about their effects, especially when they are mixed with other drugs," says Alfreda Grosrenaud, MD, a Sinai psychiatrist. She has seen patients get sick after taking herbs. "I advise talking to a doctor first."

Health tip:

People who are depressed are less able to take care of themselves. Ask them to seek help. Remind them that depression is not their fault, and that they deserve help.

DEPRESSED? SINAI CAN HELP. CALL 1-888-AT-SINAI.