



## What is Depression?

The pain and isolation of depression, a psychiatric illness, is difficult for many people to understand. Everyone feels sad, down or blue at times.

Depression is much worse than simple unhappiness. Clinical depression is a mood disorder. This means that a person's emotional state is abnormally low or sad, and the person cannot independently raise his or her mood. Depressive disorders can vary in severity.

A treated depressive episode may only last for two to six weeks; however, untreated episodes may last six to 18 months or longer. The average is about five months.

## Symptoms of Depression

- ✓ Sleep problems, either sleeping too much or too little
- ✓ Changes in appetite and weight
- ✓ Loss of interest in work, hobbies, people; loss of feeling for family members and friends
- ✓ Feelings of uselessness, hopelessness, excessive guilt
- ✓ Preoccupation with failure(s) or inadequacies and a loss of self-esteem; certain thoughts are obsessional and difficult to turn off
- ✓ Agitation or loss of energy; if you feel so restless that you cannot keep still, or if you feel too tired and weak to do anything
- ✓ Slowed thinking, forgetfulness, trouble concentrating and making decisions
- ✓ Decreased sexual drive
- ✓ A tendency to cry easily or having the urge to cry, but are unable to do so
- ✓ Suicidal or occasionally homicidal thoughts
- ✓ At times, loss of touch with reality, perhaps hearing voices (hallucination) or having strange ideas (delusions)