APRIL
SAFETY TALK

Depression

It's natural to feel "down" sometimes, but if a low mood lingers day after day, it could signal depression. Major depression is an episode of sadness or apathy (along with other symptoms) that lasts two consecutive weeks and is severe enough to interrupt daily activities.

Depression is not a sign of weakness. Depression is a mental illness that affects a person's mood; mood impacts the way people think about themselves, relate to others, and interact with the world around them.

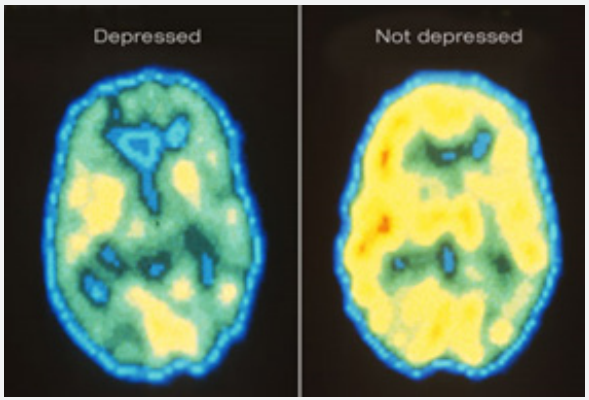
The primary symptoms of depression are a sad mood and/or loss of interest in life. People with depression may feel worthless, hopeless, guilty or anxious and may also feel irritable or angry. Depression can make it hard to focus on tasks and remember information.

Age and gender can impact how people experience depression. Men often experience anger or irritability rather than sadness, which can make depression harder for others to recognize. Young people and older adults may experience lasting changes in mood that are dismissed as a normal part of growing up or of aging.

Women are twice as likely as men to be depressed.

Depression is sometimes linked to physical symptoms, including:

- Fatigue, decreased energy
- Insomnia, especially early-morning waking
- Excessive sleep
- Persistent aches, pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not ease with treatment



Depression is observed in the above brain scan, identifying different brain activity levels of a depressed person versus a non-depressed person.

TREATMENTS

There are many different types of antidepressants used to treat this illness. While medication can help with some symptoms, they can't always eliminate the thinking patterns or beliefs that can drive mood problems. Most people could benefit from a combination of medication and counselling.

HOW CAN YOU HELP SOMEONE WITH DEPRESSION?

Depression often goes unrecognized for the mental illness it is. In order to know if someone could be suffering from depression, co-workers and loved ones would need to recognize what the persons' normal behaviour and moods are.

People who experience an episode of depression may have thoughts of ending their life. If you believe that someone is in danger, don't hesitate to call 911.

Other ways to support someone:

- Learn more about the illness and listen to the person
- Understand that someone who experiences an episode of depression may want to spend time alone – this is just a symptom, it isn't about you
- Ask the person how you can help
- Understand that recovery takes time and effort
- Contact your organizations' Employee & Family Assistance Program for advice.

British Columbia Municipal Safety Association

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