

Knowing the Difference between a Case of the Blues and Clinical Depression

Rushing to meetings and gatherings with friends and family, taking the kids from place-to-place, meeting deadlines, cleaning the house...some days it feels like it goes on and on.

At one time or another, almost everyone has felt stressed by demands at work or at home – especially during the holiday season. Stress can take a toll on how we feel both physically and emotionally and also interfere with our ability to live our lives to the fullest.

There is an important link between stress and depression. In fact, some of the problems we attribute to stress are actually caused by depression. Likewise, some forms of stress can make people more likely to become depressed.

We all feel blue from time to time, and for various reasons, the holidays can bring those feelings to the forefront. But, depression is more than just feeling “stressed out” or “down in the dumps” for a few days. True clinical depression is more intense, lasts longer, and can significantly interfere with day-to-day activities – and it’s more common than you may think.

Depression affects approximately 15 million American adults according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. It is so widespread that it has been dubbed “the common cold of mental illness.”

According to Mental Health America, people suffering from depression often experience some of these key symptoms:

- A persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood
- Sleeping too little, early morning awakening, or sleeping too much
- Reduced appetite and weight loss, or increased appetite and weight gain
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Restlessness or irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Please contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or make an appointment with your primary care physician (PCP) if you experience five or more of these symptoms for longer than two weeks or if the symptoms are severe enough to interfere with your daily routine.

Having a Primary Care Physician (PCP) who can coordinate your care is vital to your good health. A PCP typically specializes in Family Medicine, Internal Medicine or General Practice. If you don't have a PCP, finding one is easy! Just visit your insurance carrier's website, look for the “find a doctor” area and follow the instructions.