What is depression?

Everybody feels blue or sad sometimes. Depression is more than just feeling sad. If you feel overwhelmed, agitated or isolated for two weeks or longer, you may be depressed. Depression is a common, but serious condition. The good news is that you are not alone and you can get better and feel like yourself again.

What are the warning signs of depression?

- Feeling sad, down, irritable, nervous, or out of sorts
- Loss of interest or pleasure in almost all activities
- Feeling worthless, guilty, hopeless, or helpless
- Eating more or less than usual
- Difficulty thinking or making decisions
- Little or no interest in sex
- Low energy, tiredness
- Feeling restless or agitated
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Withdrawal from others
- Talking about or having thoughts of death or suicide

Get help now if you are thinking about suicide! Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) or go to www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org. You can also call 911 or go to an emergency room.

How can you get help? Where do you start?

The important thing is to speak up and ask for help. Talk to a friend, family member, doctor, or reach out to someone in your faith community. A doctor can help determine what is going on, why it is happening, and how to help. See if there is an employee assistance program, known as an EAP, at your job. You can also call the local community mental health center, a therapist, or a help line.

What are your treatment options?

Your options may include talk therapy or counseling, medicines, support groups, and other help. The treatments often work better when they are used together.

Can you get better without treatment?

Depression can be damaging when left untreated. It can lead to relationship problems, unemployment, and even suicide. Do not wait and hope that the symptoms will go away. Drugs or alcohol may seem like a quick fix, but they can make your depression worse. Do not be ashamed or embarrassed to seek treatment. Depression is not your fault. You deserve treatment. Treatment works.

For more information about how to talk to your doctor or therapist about depression and what you can do to feel better, go to The Joint Commission website and download Speak Up: What you should know about adult depression at www.jointcommission.org/speak_up_depression.

The Joint Commission is the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.