

Depression

What is Depression?

Anyone can experience mood changes or depressive symptoms at least once in his/her lifetime. Our mood changes from happiness to sadness frequently throughout the week. However for some people mood changes can be more severe and last for a longer time especially if left untreated.

People with a clinically diagnosed major depressive disorder feel sad much more often (at least 2 weeks or more) and with greater severity to the point that it affects every part of their lives (Leahy & Holland, 2000). Their personality, mood, energy, interest/pleasure in things they normally enjoy may change negatively. The severity of depression is different for each person.

What are some symptoms of Depression? (Leahy & Holland, 2000; NAMI 2009; NIMH, 2011)

- Loss of energy and/or interest in activities
- Weight gain or weight loss (loss of appetite)
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, feeling sad or tearful for no particular reason
- Feeling anxious
- Criticizing yourself
- Not wanting to be with others
- Easily bothered
- Having trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much
- Physical complaints such as body aches, headaches, dizziness, stomach pains that continue even with medical treatment (APA, 2008)
- Thoughts of suicide

How prevalent is Depression in Hispanic/Latino population?

Depression is very common. In the general population, 1 in 10 adults have reported having depression (APA, 2011). Each year, there are about 10 to 14 million people who are experiencing depression (NAMI, 2009).

Latinos are more likely than Whites to experience depression. In the Latino community, older adults and youths are especially vulnerable to the stresses of immigration and adaptation to the American culture (APA, 2007). In addition, females are twice as likely as males to experience depression both in the general population and in the Latino community (NAMI, 2009). However, Latinos are less likely than any other groups to seek professional help. Oftentimes, Latinos mistake depression for temporary tiredness or physical sickness. (APA, 2007)

What may cause Depression? (APA, 2011)

There is no one specific cause of depression. It is a mix of:

- Psychological – i.e negative thoughts, stress
- Personality – i.e low self-esteem, low self-confidence, easily overwhelmed by stress
- Biological - chemical changes in the brain, changes in hormones or genetics
- Medical conditions – i.e brain tumor, vitamin deficiency.
- Environmental - i.e exposure to violence, neglect, abuse or poverty, inequality, and discrimination
- Life events – i.e losing a loved one, divorce or financial problems

How is Depression treated? (APA, 2011)

- "Therapy or "talk therapy"
You can meet with a professional individually or have family/couples therapy to help you figure out what is bothering you, and how you can change. Therapy such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can help you change the way you think about things and the way you react or behave so that a problem won't cause you as much stress or worry.
- Medication
Antidepressants may be prescribed to help balance or normalize the levels of chemicals in the brain. This can help you have better control of how you feel, think, and act.
Be sure you let the professional know about your medical history (for example, diabetes, hypertension) because different medications can affect each other (NAMI, 2009)

What can I do now?

If you received an elevated score, we strongly encourage you to seek out mental health resources listed on the resource sheet. Depression can be treated, but the longer you wait, the greater the harm it can cause. Although many Latinos fear that lack of insurance or English proficiency will be a barrier, there are many resources that can provide you with help

References

- American Psychiatric Association (2007). *Mental health in the Hispanic/Latino community* [Brochure]. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyminds.org/Document-Library/Brochure-Library/Hispanic/Latino-Community.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- American Psychiatric Association (2008). *Mental Health: A guide for Latinos and their families* [Brochure]. Retrieved from <http://healthyminds.org/Document-Library/Brochure-Library/Mental-Health-A-Guide-for-Latinos-and-Their-Families.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- American Psychiatric Association (2011). Depression. Retrieved from <http://healthyminds.org/Main-Topic/Depression.aspx>
- Healthy Place. (2011, December 08). How do Hispanics experience depression. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyplace.com/depression/articles/how-do-hispanics-experience-depression/>
- Leahy, R.L., & Holland, S.J. (2000). Depression. In E.L. Zuckerman (Ed.), *Treatment plans and intervention for depression and anxiety disorders* (pp.12-36). New York: The Guilford Press.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2009, October). Latina Women and Depression. Retrieved from http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Women_and_Depression&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=88887
- National Institute of Mental Health (2011, July 27). Depression. Retrieved from <http://www.nimh.gov/health/publications/depression/what-are-the-signs-and-symptoms-of-depression.shtml>
- Radloff, L.S. (1991). The use of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale in adolescents and young adults. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 20(2), 149-166. doi:10.1007/BF01537606