

WELL *on your way*

DEPRESSION (Mental Health)

Clinical depression is one of the most common mental illnesses, affecting more than 19 million Americans each year. This includes major depressive disorder, manic depression and dysthymia, a milder, longer-lasting form of depression. Depression causes people to lose pleasure from daily life, can complicate other medical conditions, and can even be serious enough to lead to suicide. Depression can occur to anyone, at any age, and to people of any race or ethnic group. Depression is never a "normal" part of life, no matter what your age, gender or health situation.

However, clinical depression is very treatable, with more than 80% of those who seek treatment showing improvement. The most commonly used treatments are antidepressant medication, psychotherapy or a combination of the two. The choice of treatment depends on the pattern, severity, persistence of depressive symptoms and the history of the illness. As with many illnesses, early treatment is more effective and helps prevent the likelihood of serious recurrences. Depression must be treated by a physician or qualified mental health professional.

DO YOU KNOW THE SIGNS?

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood.
- Sleeping too much or too little, middle of the night or early morning waking.
- Reduced appetite and weight loss, or increased appetite and weight gain.
- Loss of pleasure and interest in activities once enjoyed, including intimacy.
- Restlessness, irritability.
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment (such as chronic pain or digestive disorders).
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions.
- Fatigue or loss of energy.
- Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless.
- Thoughts of suicide or death.



NEED ADDITIONAL HELP?

If you have five or more of these symptoms for longer than two weeks, you could have clinical depression and should see your doctor or a qualified mental health professional for help. Piedmont Community Health Plan along with our network of local participating physicians and counselors, has programs to help our members deal with clinical depression with the latest medical treatments and therapies available.

For information about mental health services in your community, please contact the Mental Health Association of Central VA at **(434) 847-9055**, or check out their Web site: **www.mhacv.org**. They can answer your questions and they also offer free mental health screenings.

For all other questions please consult with your Piedmont Network physician or call us at **(434) 947-4463** or **(800) 400-7247**.

** Above information obtained from National Institute of Mental Health.*

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PIEDMONT COMMUNITY HEALTH PLAN

