

Occasional feelings of sadness or “the blues” are a normal part of life. However, when these feelings last for more than a few weeks, it may mean that a person is suffering from depression, which is a medical condition. Warning signs that someone may be struggling with depression include:

- ▶ Significant increase or decrease in appetite
- ▶ Prolonged change in sleep patterns
- ▶ Chronic fatigue or lack of energy
- ▶ Poor concentration or memory
- ▶ Physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomach aches
- ▶ Loss of interest or pleasure in leisure activities
- ▶ Sadness, grief, guilt, hopelessness, or low self-esteem

Mild or short-term bouts of depression may be helped by:

- ▶ Eating regular meals that include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- ▶ Aiming for seven to nine hours of sleep a night
- ▶ Avoiding or minimizing the use of alcohol or legal drugs
- ▶ Exercising 20-30 minutes a day four to five times a week
- ▶ Talking to supportive family or friends about the situation
- ▶ Breaking routine by trying a new activity or taking a short trip



The Warning Signs of Depression and Suicide

Long-term or severe feelings of depression require professional assistance. Talking to a professional counselor often helps to alleviate symptoms. In addition, some individuals may benefit from an anti-depressant or other prescribed medication.

Feelings of depression may sometimes escalate into suicidal thoughts or even actions. Behaviors that may indicate that a person is at risk for suicide include:

- ▶ Drastic changes in behavior
- ▶ Withdrawal from friends or social activities
- ▶ Recent severe losses
- ▶ Previous suicide attempts
- ▶ Giving away personal possessions
- ▶ Risky behavior and activities
- ▶ A preoccupation with death
- ▶ A sudden change from depressed behavior to a happy, calm state
- ▶ Comments like “No one would notice if I just disappeared” or “I wish I could go to sleep and never wake up”
- ▶ Statements that indicate a plan for self-harm, such as “If I were going to kill myself, I’d (description of method)”

If you are experiencing any of these warning signs, or if you notice them in a friend or family member, seek help. LifeMatters offers 24/7/365 access to resources and emotional support. Please call.

Call **LifeMatters®** by Empathia toll-free anytime. **1-800-367-7474**

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