

Depression and Our Health

It Can Happen to Anyone

We often think of depression as something that happens to people who encounter a trauma, and that's certainly true much of the time. But depression as a clinical disorder is much more complex and common. And it's especially common in people with heart or lung disease.

How It Feels

With depression, certainly we often feel sad. But we will also feel tension in our muscles, low energy, a blah interest in things, trouble focusing, and maybe irritability and a desire to avoid people. These symptoms are more than just uncomfortable. They also are known to make our heart and lungs work harder, less efficiently.

How It Hurts

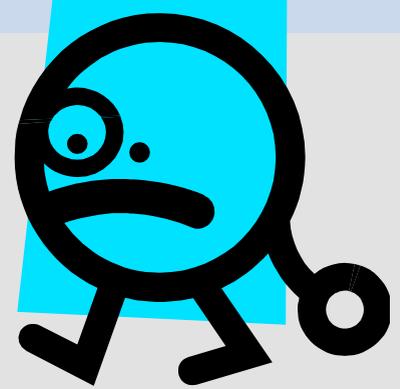
Recovery from heart and lung problems when you're having depression symptoms takes longer, costs more, and often leads more medical symptoms. When you're already dealing with post-surgical discomfort, a need to change your diet, managing more medications, and changing your everyday routine, dealing with the symptoms of depression on top of all of this can feel overwhelming.

Help Is Easy

Fortunately, there are several options to help you deal with any depressive symptoms. Seeing a psychologist or a counselor can help you learn strategies for resolving the depression without adding medications to your list. But sometimes medication makes a positive contribution too. There are many anti-depressant medications available.

Ask your rehab staff for a referral to a local psychologist or counselor and whether a medical evaluation might be needed for possible medications. If your program has a mental health professional on staff, make good use of the available times to learn to cope with depression.

Doing these things will make managing your depressive symptoms possible. You don't have to suffer needlessly. And you'll be glad to get your old self back.



What Science Tells Us

Women who were more depressed and socially isolated experienced more rapid growth of their coronary blockages.

Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, 2006;75(2):96-102

Heart attack patients who were more depressed in the hospital were more likely to die sooner.

American Journal of Cardiology, 2001; 5:337-341

Younger people who experienced more depression in their lives were more likely to have higher levels of a protein in their blood that signals an increased risk of heart disease later.

Archives of Internal Medicine, 2004;164:1010-1014

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