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**Depression; a Misunderstood Disease**

*By Stephanie Mallet*

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## **About the Author**

Stephanie Mallet was surprised by the terrible effect that depression had on a close friend and, especially, the consequences for that friend's family as they tried to cope without proper support.

She says that many people just joke about depression but it is too serious for that.

She realized that she could write a simple, straight-forward guide that would help to prepare those people that suffered from the disease.

But, she wanted to ensure that her book will also help their families and close friends to cope with the situation and show them how to ensure that the patient gets the best care and advice.

Stephanie knows many people that have regained control of their lives after serious bouts of depression and, while there is no guaranteed cure, she hopes that her book will help to show many patients that they have a good chance to do the same.



## Part-I: Introduction

### 1. Unipolar Depression - An Overview

Unipolar depression is a severe form of depression that is the same as clinical depression or major-depressive disorder. It is a serious illness and may have severe disabling effects.

Unipolar depression affects more than ten million Americans every year. It ranks among the leading causes for disability in America.

It affects women more severely than men.

Unipolar depression is a psychiatric disorder that makes you disinterested in your normal activities. You are always in a low mood and do not find happiness in anything.

It affects normal routine functions like eating and sleeping.

It is a chronic and recurring illness; most people with unipolar depression suffer more than one episode in their life.

This depression occurs across all age groups and is not confined to any particular group or socio-economic background.

Unipolar depression can occur anytime. It may be a one-time occurrence and you may recover completely after treatment.

Or, it could recur soon after treatment.

This depression may set in gradually or suddenly. Unipolar depression could be a factor in some suicides.

The incidence of this depression is high between the ages of 25 and 44. Depression episodes may last for six to nine months.

Sometimes, depression goes away by itself without the sufferer undergoing any specific treatment. This is probably due to the

body's own tendency to correct irregularities and return to normal status.

Unipolar depression may be brewing within you for quite some time before symptoms show themselves clearly. Small disappointments and problems could compound their effects into severe depression.

Some people may develop it through no action of their own.

Sometimes, it could occur due to trauma or severe shock.

Common symptoms of unipolar depression include:

- A lack of interest in the simple pleasures of life.
- You become irritable and are always sad.
- You have drastic changes in your eating and sleeping habits.
- You lose your appetite and do not like any kind of food.
- You cannot sleep and are constantly tense.
- You are unable to concentrate or think clearly.
- You feel as if you are worthless and hopeless.
- You feel guilty for no particular reason.

These intense feelings may translate into severe headaches and other chronic pain, which may not easily respond to any form of treatment.

People suffering from unipolar depression may experience some or all of these symptoms. If these symptoms linger for more than a fortnight, you should seek medical treatment.

There are some different treatment options for unipolar depression. The one that your doctor advises will depend on the intensity of the problem and your suitability for any specific treatment plan.

Common treatment options include:

- antidepressant medications
- cognitive therapy
- psychotherapy
- electroconvulsive therapy, and
- other lifestyle changes like changing diet patterns, quitting smoking and making exercise a regular part of your daily life.

The treatment options may help you to overcome your depression and return to being your normal self after some time.

Different treatment options might be used in isolation or in combination depending on your doctor's diagnosis of your particular circumstances.

Family support can also work wonders in improving the outcome.

Many scientists believe that stress and genetics play a major role in unipolar depression. Although stress could be a major factor for causing this depression, genetic factors may also play a significant role.

Therefore, treatment therapies should be designed to take account of these factors.

Most antidepressant medications require six to twelve weeks to take full effect. These medications are intended to correct imbalances in the feel-good hormones like dopamine, serotonin and epinephrine.

Most antidepressants may have their own side effects. Families of patients should be careful during the early stages of treatment through medications.

Often, you may regain most of your energy levels although your mood is still not fully normal. This could induce you to take unwise actions.

### ***Treatment options***

Psychotherapy, interpersonal therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy and electroconvulsive therapy are treatment options for unipolar depression.

Psychotherapy can prove effective in cases of mild depression. For treating severe depression, a combination of therapy and medications may work the best.

Electroconvulsive therapy is a treatment option that may be considered if other treatment options and medications do not yield desired results.

## Part-II: Understanding Unipolar Depression

### 2. What Is Unipolar Depression?

Unipolar depression is a form of severe depression. It is also known as 'major depressive disorder'.

It is a major illness affecting more than ten to fifteen million Americans and a leading cause for disability, not only in the United States but also across other developed countries.

Unipolar depression can affect people across all ages and any social or economic background.

Normally, half of the people experiencing depression could continue to have frequent, very debilitating episodes, sometimes once or twice a year.

#### *Symptoms*

Unipolar depression has many symptoms. Prominent among them are:

- obvious changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- fatigue
- loss of interest in normal activities that you usually have enjoyed
- a persistent feeling of being useless and worthless
- inability to concentrate or take appropriate decisions, and
- a recurring desire to end your life.

Improper sleep and eating patterns may be mainly responsible for changes in weight and your overall feeling of fatigue. You could lose excessive weight or put on lot of weight.

You also experience physical symptoms like headaches, stomach aches, and frequently lack energy to do anything.

These physical symptoms restrict your ability and desire to do anything. This makes you feel guilty and negative feelings develop.

You feel there is no end to any of these symptoms; that they will continue forever. You feel very pessimistic.

If you experience most of these symptoms for more than fifteen days, you may be suffering from unipolar depression. You should get immediate treatment of your depression problems. Without proper treatment, the symptoms could be aggravated and have serious consequences.

Family and friends can prove to be a major pillar of strength and support during your bouts of depression. They offer comforting advice and help.

However, if you are experiencing severe symptoms of unipolar depression, you may not take their advice or pay heed to their words. You would continue to deny all their efforts.

But, efforts by your family and friends would not go to waste. Persistent efforts may help to bring positive changes.

### 3. Causes of Unipolar Depression

There is no single defined and attributable cause for unipolar depression. A combination of various physical, psychological, environmental, and social causes usually leads to unipolar depression. Earlier, unipolar depression was thought to be mainly due to emotional upsets. However, it is not so.

Sometimes, it could be genetic and many generations of your family would experience symptoms of unipolar depression.

However, it is also common for a person without any family history of depression to experience serious symptoms of unipolar depression.

#### **Common Possible Causes for Unipolar Depression**

**Stress:** Physical and mental stress are important contributors to unipolar depression. Stress could be the main force causing depression in the early stages. Later, symptoms compound due to other associated factors like temperament, physical ailments and your genetic make-up.

**Trauma or Accident:** Serious traumatic events, like loss of a beloved, parents, or close relatives and friends could cause unipolar depression. Serious physical accidents could cause you to go into a state of severe shock and cause depression. Childhood traumas remain imprinted in the mind and could cause depression if something similar happens in later life.

Other factors that might trigger depression could be loss of a job, change in surroundings like shifting to a new place or contracting a serious illness.

**Genetics:** Sometimes unipolar depression is due to hereditary factors. If depression runs in your family, you could fall victim to it if you have to face serious problems or disappointments.

However, there is insufficient scientific evidence to prove such hereditary factors are the most significant causes for unipolar depression.

**Physical factors:** Insufficient nutrition and lack of necessary vitamins and minerals in your diet cannot satisfy the requirements of your body. This could cause a depressive state of mind that affects your biological functions and lead to unipolar depression.

**Hormonal imbalances:** Drastic changes in hormone levels could lead to a varied range of emotions. You could be overtly alert, hyperactive and sensitive while at other times, you could become subdued and reclusive.

Experiencing such high and low emotional swings could cause unipolar depression.

**Social factors:** Various social causes, like breakup of your family or worrying too much about external social factors such as nuclear families, the gaps between the rich and the poor and many people's monotonous lives may take a toll on your mental health.

You could feel trapped forever into a vicious circle of work and home, with no time or energy to experience and enjoy natural beauty.

This might lead to unipolar depression.

**Medications:** Certain antidepressants, prescription drugs like steroids, stimulants, antibiotics and sedatives may cause serious side effects that sometimes lead to unipolar depression.



You may have to take such medications to combat unrelated illnesses. Some people may be physically capable of dealing with the side effects while others may not be able to and depression sets in.

## 4. Unipolar Depression vs. Bipolar Depression

Symptoms of bipolar depression and unipolar depression are similar. This often causes confusion.

Incorrect diagnosis might cause you to undergo treatment for depression that may not deliver desired results, as you are not taking the correct medication.

### *The difference between bipolar and unipolar depression.*

Bipolar depression is often associated with a manic episode in the past.

Bipolar depression occurs in two phases. It has a manic phase and a depression phase, which is what is usually referred to as bipolar depression.

The manic phase of bipolar depression may cause you to have excessive energy and poor fatigue levels.

You may be able to manage a lot of work with hardly any rest or sleep.

You become irritable and are forever short-tempered.

You take reckless decisions and talk irrationally.

You could go on huge spending sprees.

You experience severe mood changes and possibly extreme behavior, like being very over-energetic and being very low on energy which increases your depression.

Unipolar depression only has a depression phase.

You feel low and may harbor suicidal thoughts.

You feel very sad and dejected.

You are always unhappy and do not experience any highs.

You lack energy and the will to do anything.

You become pessimistic.

You feel hopeless and useless.

## 5. Signs and Symptoms of Unipolar Depression

If you experience persistent symptoms of unipolar depression for more than two weeks, you should get medical care and attention.

### *Common symptoms:*

**Change in sleep patterns:** If you experience marked changes in your sleeping patterns extending from excessive sleeping to lack of sleep at night, it could indicate unipolar depression.

**Diet:** You could go on a binge and be constantly eating or you could develop an aversion for food and refuse to eat anything. This might cause serious changes in your weight, either gaining or losing an unhealthy number of pounds.

**Fatigue:** Poor diet with a lack of sufficient rest and sleep causes extreme fatigue and tiredness. Then, you are unable to do much physical activity and feel very low because of your incapacity.

**Irritation:** Poor nutrition, lack of sufficient sleep and overall fatigue takes a toll on your mental health.

You become irritable and snap at everything. You get angry at the slightest pretext.

You feel restless and feel you are useless and hopeless.

You consider yourself a waste.

You feel guilty of everything and a failure.

**Withdrawal:** You seem to distance yourself from the normal pleasures of life. You do not take part in any of the pleasurable activities you used to enjoy.

You become a recluse and accuse yourself of being responsible for all depressing events in your life.

**Suicidal Tendencies:** You underestimate yourself greatly and may develop serious suicidal tendencies. You feel it is better to die than live such a life.

You view your physical and emotional problems as your failures.

**Lack of Concentration:** You are unable to concentrate on anything or think about anything very well. You are permanently pessimistic and have no more positive thoughts in your mind.

**Poor Self-Confidence:** You lose your confidence and feel you will not be able to accomplish anything.

You lack motivation and do not pay heed to advice from your family members and friends.

You continue to increase your feeling of guilt, sometimes to the point of becoming physically and mentally incapable.

## 6. Common Myths about Unipolar Depression

There are many myths about unipolar depression.

**Myth:** Unipolar depression is a problem of the elderly. Young people feel they can never become a victim of depression.

This is not true.

Unipolar depression has no age bar. It could affect a teenager or an elderly person equally.

**Myth:** Unipolar depression occurs due to serious flaws in a person's character.

This is another myth without any basis.

Anybody can experience unipolar depression. It has nothing to do with the emotional quotient of a person.

**Myth:** If you have unipolar depression, you are weak and incapacitated. This is a myth. Depression may make you feel weak and emotionally low.

However, proper treatment can get you out of the doldrums and make you feel and act and be a normal person again.

**Myth:** Unipolar depression is a state of mind and therefore, there is no need for treatment. This is wrong. Depression could affect your thinking. Yet, there is a strong need of medical treatment to overcome such low feelings and be a normal being again.

Support from family and friends can help you regain your normal self.

**Myth:** Antidepressant medications can make all signs of unipolar depression disappear. This is a myth. Even with prescribed

medications, you require regular counseling and psychological therapies to overcome your depression episodes. Medications can combat physical factors. Therapies provide remedy for emotional factors causing unipolar depression.

### **Part-III: People and Unipolar Depression**

## **7. Who Gets Unipolar Depression?**

Unipolar depression affects more than nineteen million Americans annually.

This clinical depression affects people across all ages, sexes, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Its incidence is higher in women than in men.

### **People Who Can Get Unipolar Depression**

If there is history of depression in your family, you can get it at any stage of your life. If you have experienced a single episode of unipolar depression, there is a high chance of a reoccurrence any time later in your life.

Unipolar depression could be a side effect of medications that you may be prescribed for high blood pressure, diabetes, thyroid disease, or if you take steroids or oral contraceptives.

If one of your family members or close relatives is ill and you are caring for them, you could develop unipolar depression.

If you are an alcoholic or drug-user, you can develop unipolar depression. Similarly, if you are withdrawing from such addictions, you could develop unipolar depression as a side-effect of the withdrawal process.

If you have been a victim of any traumatic event in your life, unipolar depression could set in later due to that incident.

If you have a low self-esteem and constantly doubt your own abilities, you could have unipolar depression.



If you are under severe stress, like familial problems or problems in your professional life, you could develop unipolar depression.

## 8. Unipolar Depression in Children

Unipolar depression can occur in children. It is estimated that more than five percent of those suffering from unipolar depression are children.

These disorders are common in children with substance abuse and learning disabilities.

It is often difficult to diagnose and pin down symptoms of unipolar depression in children.

This is because it is associated with other behaviors like hyperactivity, aggressiveness, irritability, delinquency, and moodiness.

It becomes more difficult to detect depression signs in older children as most symptoms are similar to common adolescent characteristics.

### Symptoms of Unipolar Depression in Children

**Withdrawal Symptoms:** Some children could gradually become reclusive; they do not take part in activities they used to enjoy. They stay away from friends, do not enjoy playing with them and complain of being bored.

**Melancholy:** The children are perpetually sad and depressed. They prefer listening to and writing sad stories, poems or songs. They prefer dressing in black clothes and often express feelings of being worthless.

**Low Energy Levels:** The children suffer from poor motivation and have very low physical and mental energy levels. They avoid attending school regularly and like to laze around doing nothing.

They do not enjoy playing either. They suffer from poor concentration and their grades fall.

**Change in Eating and Sleeping Patterns:** These children show no interest in eating, not even their favorite foods. They complain of lack of appetite and, consequently, suffer from poor physical health.

They develop irregular sleeping patterns by staying awake for long hours at night and then are unable to wake up in the morning for school. They sleep to excess during daylight.

All these irregular habits may trigger headaches, stomach aches and immense fatigue.

**Intense Feelings:** Children develop very intense feelings which grow into anger. Then they:

have arguments with siblings,

cry uncontrollably,

complain about everything and everybody,

accuse parents for all bad happenings,

take foolish risks, and

develop a careless attitude for anything that could happen to them.

It is best to seek professional medical help if more than two or three of these symptoms persist for a long period. Medications and psychotherapy can help to control unipolar depression in children.

## 9. Unipolar Depression in Adolescents

Adolescents often fall prey to unipolar depression. The incidence is particularly high in post-pubertal teenagers.

Teenage girls may exhibit a higher incidence of depression than teenage boys do.

Unipolar depression could be due to:

- child abuse,
- loss of a parent or close relative,
- separation of parents due to divorce,
- chronic illness,
- poor social skills or
- insufficient care given by their parents.

But, it is difficult to identify depression as it may resemble normal adolescent behavior in teenagers.

Teenagers with unipolar depression exhibit symptoms such as:

withdrawal from regular activities,

difficulties in school,

relationship problems with friends,

irregularities in eating and sleeping patterns,

excessive indulgence in abuse substances including tobacco and alcohol, low moods, becoming irritable, having very low self-esteem, and suicide attempts.

Teenagers exhibit more cognitive symptoms than normal physical symptoms associated with unipolar depression. Feelings of despair,

hopelessness, and low self-confidence are prominent symptoms of unipolar depression in teenagers.

Teenagers may develop hypersomnia or excessive sleeping in place of the normal insomnia associated with unipolar depression in adults.

The average duration of a unipolar depression episode could be nine to twelve months. This could rob teenagers of a crucial year of academic progress and learning of work skills.

If the depression goes unnoticed, it could have long-term consequences on their psychological and vocational development.

Unipolar depression could be a more common occurrence in teenagers with a family history of depression.

Teenagers that have many risk factors and come from poor social backgrounds could be more likely to suffer from depression.

### **Detection of Warning Symptoms**

Although most symptoms of unipolar depression are similar to adolescent behaviors, if the symptoms continue for more than a month, it may be best to visit a trained professional for testing.

School counselors and similar caregivers could have a great soothing effect on depressed teenagers. Often, teenagers confide their problems in their friends.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is the best treatment option for teenagers with unipolar depression. This treatment method does not use any medications.

Instead, trained counselors teach teenagers to combat all negative thoughts and help them to come out of their depressed moods.

## 10. Unipolar Depression in Women

Women are twice as likely as men to experience unipolar depression. One in every five women may develop unipolar depression at some time in their life.

This may cause:

- extreme sadness,
- irritability,
- fatigue,
- anxiety, and
- drastic changes in eating and sleeping patterns.

Depressed women may also experience chronic pain and feel worthless and hopeless.

It may also increase suicidal tendencies.

The incidence of unipolar depression is higher in women than men due to biological differences of their hormones and genes.

Other causes may include:

- higher stress levels due to work and familial responsibilities,
- increased rate of sexual abuse,
- being a single parent,
- caring for aged parents, and
- social factors like poverty.

Normally, women experience depression during or before menstrual periods, after pregnancy and during menopause. However, such

depression episodes normally do not last long and should subside within a week.

Women with a history of unipolar depression could experience longer bouts of depression during such periods and may require medical care and attention.

Elderly women encounter unipolar depression due to:

- death of their spouse,
- serious illnesses like diabetes, cancer, arthritis and heart ailments

Although unipolar depression is not an ailment of old age, chances of developing it increases in later years due to reduced physical and mental strength.

Unipolar depression is less reported among African American women than Hispanic and Caucasian women.

Women that suffered child abuse, sexual abuse or rape in their growing years are more prone to unipolar depression. Similarly, women facing harassment at work develop low self-confidence levels and a feeling of helplessness which may encourage the development of clinical depression.

Poverty is an important factor for causing unipolar depression in women. Seventy-five percent of the total US population is women and children with a low economic status. Depression due to low morale, sadness, frequent occurrence of negative events, uncertainty, and limited access to help is common.

Despite all factors and causes for unipolar depression, it does not signify any special weakness of women.

You should not leave it untreated or just regard it as a normal part of being a woman.

Unipolar depression in any form and at any age is probably curable.

The most common treatment option includes a combination of antidepressants with psychological therapy.



## 11. Unipolar Depression in Men

Some research seems to indicate the possibility that men experience a lower incidence of unipolar depression than women do.

Unipolar depression manifesting in men could occur at any age.

In young boys, it shows when they lose interest in regular playtime and seek to distance themselves from their friends. Small boys who prefer solitude and develop irregular eating and sleeping habits may have depression.

Unipolar depression in adolescent boys could make them more aggressive, causing them to take drastic steps for small upsets. They become very angry at the slightest pretext and are always ready to fight.

Further, fighting among siblings and teenaged boys could become ugly. Adolescent boys with unipolar depression exhibit a low-level of self-confidence and start dropping their academic grades.

Normally, men in their middle age are the supporters and breadwinners of their family. Unsuccessful careers, broken relationships and an inability to perform and deliver could make them a social recluse.

Such men are unable to maintain their confidence levels and feel lacking in all aspects of their life.

Any emotional upsets from their younger days may surface now. This makes them more susceptible to physical and mental illness.

Anxiety can take the form of reduced mental health and may even lead to symptoms of schizophrenia.

Substance abuse, like drugs and alcohol, can take a toll on any healthy male. Men often take refuge in these to overcome their failures in marriage or professionally.

The result may be unipolar depression.

Men in their sixties could experience unipolar depression due to loss of a spouse, poor physical health, ailing mental health or the presence of various diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's or respiratory and heart ailments.

Most men at this stage feel they have nothing to do and therefore become susceptible to loneliness and boredom. This may cause unipolar depression.

Medical care and treatment is essential for fixing unipolar depression in men of any age group. Sensitized family members and friends can boost their morale further and help to prevent more serious outcomes.

## 12. Unipolar Depression in the Elderly

Unipolar depression is common in the elderly. Physical and mental problems often surface in old age.

The elderly often face various disorders like emotional upsets, loneliness, boredom, poor physical health and increased susceptibility to different ailments.

Depression may manifest itself in some form. This is why unipolar depression often goes unnoticed in the elderly until it is well advanced.

Dementia and schizophrenia cause marked changes in behavior of the elderly. This can have serious effects and make the elderly more dependent on different medications.

Some medications, like some antibiotics and steroids, may cause depression as a side effect.

Such depression could take the form of unipolar depression in the elderly.

Often, unipolar depression symptoms are treated as common symptoms of old age. Therefore, diagnosis and treatment is later and at a reduced level.

Another major impediment to prompt treatment for unipolar depression is that the elderly do not commonly report such symptoms until it becomes advanced.

Another major cause is the social stigma attached to unipolar depression. The elderly feel that admitting to their depression symptoms could make them a social outcast and, therefore, many prefer to hide all symptoms until they become very obvious.

This is one of the most important causes for increasing suicides among the elderly.

Insomnia and sleep disturbances are common symptoms of various ailments affecting the elderly. So, these symptoms do not stand out among the different symptoms of unipolar depression in the elderly.

However, regular sleep problems should not be ignored and remedial measures are necessary to counter unipolar depression in the elderly in the initial stages, whenever possible.

However, unipolar depression in the elderly is not anything to be worried or anxious about. There are medications and psychotherapy treatments available that can be modified to suit the elderly.

This helps them to get more enjoyment from all the pleasures of life with less restriction.

It also improves their general health and their ability to care for themselves.

Various treatments are claimed to have success rates ranging from 60% to 80%. But, treatments for unipolar depression take a longer time to deliver the desired results in the elderly.

## Part-IV: Diagnosis and Clinical Aspects

### 13. When to Seek Medical Advice

Unipolar depression exhibits many symptoms like:

- changes in eating and sleeping patterns,
- a constant melancholic feeling,
- excessive tiredness,
- lacking desire or energy to do anything,
- disconnecting socially, and
- harboring an overall feeling of hopelessness, worthlessness, and total inadequacy.

If you have these symptoms for more than two weeks, you should disclose them to close family members or friends and seek medical advice.

Unipolar depression is nothing to be ashamed or afraid of.

Many trained medical professionals can make the correct diagnosis and administer any necessary treatment. You may need the help of a psychotherapist or psychiatrist.

Unipolar depression often responds positively to simple antidepressants and therapies. It could take around a month for your medications to take full effect, although you can notice changes after two weeks.

## 14. How Is Unipolar Depression Diagnosed?

Unipolar depression is mostly a psychological ailment and it requires a thorough psychological evaluation.

But, doctors first diagnose you for any possible medical ailments that could cause depressing thoughts and deficiencies. Doctors also check into any medications you are currently taking like those for high blood pressure, oral contraceptives or others that may have depression as a side effect.

If you do not have any serious physical ailments or taking any medications or other treatment that might have caused your depression, doctors could put you under a psychological evaluation.

This evaluation normally starts with a complete check of any family history of depression. If there has been any instance of depression among family members you would have to disclose:

- all treatments,
- medications used,
- how long the depression lasted,
- have there been any relapses, and
- how that patient is now.

Next, a psychologist could evaluate all your symptoms completely. They need to know;

- the duration of your symptoms,
- how long you have experienced them
- whether they have become worse over time
- do you experience them constantly or in specific bouts

- does anything in particular heighten your symptoms, and
- how severe are your symptoms?

You need to tell the doctor about your alcohol use, drug use, use of any sedatives, and anything that you are doing which might be relevant.

You must tell them if you harbor any thoughts of committing suicide and how often such thoughts occur.

These mental evaluations are considered along with any sign of the presence of other diseases like an eating disorder, anxiety disorder, attention deficit disorder or hyperactivity disorder.

Next, psychologists would do a detailed analysis of any treatments that you have undergone earlier for unipolar depression or if you are presently taking any medications.

Then, they would evaluate your present mental status. This will help them analyze your mental abilities, detect any shortcomings, and assess if any shortcomings are the result of medication or if they are independent.

Doctors check whether the occurrence of your symptoms is daily and for the major part of the day before they consider a diagnosis of unipolar depression to be likely.

### **Treatment**

The complete evaluation by your psychologist would determine the recommended treatment option for curing your unipolar depression. Normally, psychotherapy sessions prove to be the most effective.

However, sometimes psychologists do recommend antidepressants for quicker relief from unipolar depression symptoms.

Doctors could prescribe electroconvulsive therapy and hospitalization in severe cases.

Medications cannot cure your depression problems, but may provide some relief from physical problems.

So, psychology therapy sessions may deliver desired results. But, it could take quite some time and you need to be patient and persist in your treatment procedures.

Friends and family could prove to be a major source of support during such times.

Chances of recurrence of unipolar depression after successful treatment could be as high as 50%.



## **15. Examinations and Tests to Determine Unipolar Depression**

Doctors normally conduct a thorough physical examination to detect any underlying problems or ailments in you that could be the cause for unipolar depression.

There are no laboratory tests or x-rays to determine the presence of unipolar depression.

If there is no physical ailment, your family doctor could refer you to a reputable psychologist or psychiatrist.

Psychiatrists and psychologists examine your family history for any depression symptoms. They will discuss your regular habits, including any drugs and alcohol.

They will ask you questions on your feelings about life and if you are thinking deeply about death or similar events with serious consequences.

Specialists give children specific assessments to determine their ability to reason, remember, and think. It could also include a short verbal test to examine their abilities with speech and thought.

Sometimes, children could undergo blood tests to rule out anemia or an under active thyroid gland.

Psychologists and psychiatrists use diagnostic tools as specified in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), published by the American Psychiatric Association.

The Beck Depression Inventory was created by Dr. Aaron T. Beck in 1961. This is a 21-question survey completed by patients. It

contains questions related to all possible symptoms of unipolar depression.

There are two health questionnaires, PHQ-2 and PHQ-9. PHQ-2 has only two questions and your answers to these decide the necessity for doing PHQ-9.

## 16. Self-Testing for Unipolar Depression

Psychological and physical symptoms of unipolar depression differ from person to person. However, if you exhibit some of the following symptoms persistently for more than two weeks, it might be best to seek treatment for unipolar depression:

- Feeling bored, irritable, anxious and agitated
- Losing interest in almost everything in life
- Constantly harboring a feeling of unhappiness and sadness
- Losing your appetite and developing insomnia
- Feeling extremely tired and drained of all energy
- Having negative thoughts about yourself and doubting your abilities
- Losing your self-confidence
- Harboring serious intentions of a suicide
- Feeling that you are worthless and hopeless
- Avoiding people and other forms of social contact

## 17. Medical History and Unipolar Depression Diagnosis

Doctors diagnose unipolar depression according to criteria specified in a handbook called the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV).

As there are no specific laboratory tests or x-rays to diagnose unipolar depression, doctors give more credence to your medical history, family medical history and your symptoms to arrive at the correct diagnosis.

While analyzing your medical history and that of your family, doctors consider details relating to:

- Any history of depression among any of your family members
- Any depression episode anytime earlier in your life
- Any thoughts of suicide or death
- Use of alcohol and drugs

Further, they make a complete mental examination to analyze your neuro-psychiatric abilities like retention power, memory, speech, thoughts and handling mood changes.

## 18. Is It Possible to Avoid Unipolar Depression?

Incidences of unipolar depression have been on the increase in the last few decades. There are now many more cases of depression in the developed countries.

Developing countries are also following the trend due to increasing westernization. The average age of onset of depression has fallen from the thirties to the twenties.

Although genetics and individual health are the main factors in the onset of unipolar depression, there are various other factors. Overcoming these may help to change your susceptibility to depressive bouts.

Technological dependence is a major contributor to unipolar depression.

Technology helps you get things done faster. You no longer patiently wait for results. This tends to increase brain activity.

As soon as something does not go your way, you may feel a low and be less ready to bear the disappointment.

Use of technology should be restricted to important and essential needs.

Unipolar depression takes root when you stop thinking and analyzing. Allow your brain to work, question and then think about solutions.

Study your behavior and your feelings. Such brain activity is healthy and may help to keep you away from depression.

Give a lot of importance to your relationships with others. Relationships cannot be made in a day. Similarly, breaking off too quickly is also not usually advisable.

Your family, friends, and relatives can be a major source of strength in your trying times. Respect them and try to make unconditional love the foundation of any relationship.

This makes you mentally strong and keeps you away from depression.

Depression occurs when you take everything very personally. You draw wrong conclusions from events that happen and treat them as maxims.

You refuse to listen to anybody's reasoning or look into other people's views and analysis of events.

Accusing yourself of all negative happenings is demoralizing. Try to look beyond the immediate situation and accept events as they happen rather than questioning every little thing.

Try to flow with the tide and find happiness and satisfaction in every happening and event. This makes sure you are more impregnable to unipolar depression.

## 19. Life after Unipolar Depression

Unipolar depression makes you feel gloomy, sad, and disinterested in everything. You feel as if everything around you is boring and you are unable to get happiness anywhere.

However, proper treatment and therapies can get you out of unipolar depression. Yes, it will take some time for medications and therapies to take effect and bring out the desired results.

Antidepressants may have serious side effects and could complicate matters. Stick to the prescribed dosage and use according to your doctor's advice.

Over time, the antidepressants will start taking effect and you can slowly start enjoying life.

You start experiencing happy feelings just as in the past. But, this may be temporary. You may enter into a new state of depression within a short time.

This is probably not a relapse; it sometimes happens due to the way that antidepressants and therapies work.

After persistent efforts and regular medications and therapies, you are sure to come out of unipolar depression.

In the initial healing stages, you may feel reluctant to accept that things are looking up. There could be defiance, as you feel that depression cannot be cured.

You may be unable to believe that you can be free of depression.

Slowly, you are able to come out of the perpetual gloom. Then, you will be ready to accept your improved reality and feel that depression is coming under your control.

You can enjoy your rebirth and feel happier.



## **Part-V: Treating Unipolar Depression**

### **20. Treatment Options for Unipolar Depression**

Treatment options for unipolar depression are many.

There is no single proven treatment option that can deliver optimum results from unipolar depression in all patients. Every treatment option is for an individual.

Your doctor may use a combination of treatments in accordance with your emotional and physical condition.

The most common treatment option includes a combination of psychotherapy sessions and antidepressant medications.

In some severe cases, doctors could advise immediate hospitalization. This could be to prevent any mishaps if the patient might prove to be a threat to themselves.

In some cases, it could be a partial hospitalization session where they sleep at home at night and spend the entire day in a psychiatric hospital.

Doctors may suggest this treatment option for children and adolescents.

#### **Unipolar Depression Treatments**

##### ***Psychotherapy***

In isolation, this therapy is an effective treatment for mild to moderate forms of depression. Doctors normally recommend it as the first course of treatment for unipolar depression.

These sessions could be for you alone or with your spouse and other family members. The sessions help to identify the root cause for

your depression and addresses it by focusing on essential behavior patterns and control of emotions.

Psychotherapy sessions consist of talking therapy sessions, behavior therapy sessions and interpersonal and cognitive behavioral sessions.

In talking therapy sessions, psychotherapists talk with you and try to correct your deficiencies, thinking patterns, and behavioral changes.

In behavioral therapy sessions, psychotherapists teach you new behavioral forms that could change your depressive state of mind and help you attain better satisfaction and contentment in life.

In interpersonal and cognitive behavioral sessions, you learn to overcome your negative thinking and develop a better stance on life that will help to overcome your unipolar depression.

## ***2. Medications***

Common medications for unipolar depression include antidepressants. There are many antidepressants like selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), tricyclics and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs).

These medications stimulate and increase working of natural neurotransmitters in brain. This induces a positive response and helps alleviate problems due to depression.

Doctors prescribe such medications for a minimum period of four to eight weeks. This time is essential for them to cause a marked improvement in your condition.

In some cases, doctors would advise continuing use of antidepressants for six to twelve months, although on a minor dosage. This could also prevent a relapse.

Antidepressants may cause various side effects like nausea, fever, diarrhea, headaches etc.

Doctors prescribe an appropriate dosage according to the severity of your condition.

If you are on MAOIs, you should follow specific dietary and medication restrictions.

If you are on common medications for any other ailments, MAOIs could react negatively with such medications.

### ***3. Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)***

This therapy involves passing of mild electric current to create seizure-like situation in brain. Doctors prescribe this treatment option if all other forms of treatment for unipolar depression have failed to yield any positive results.

Although this treatment is the best option for those with severe unipolar depression, it could cause serious problems if administered wrongly.

A complete treatment involves twelve sessions spread over three to four weeks. Normally, it is three sessions per week.

Each session involves passing of electric current for one to two seconds while you are on anesthesia. As you are also under the effects of muscle relaxants, these induced seizures do not affect other parts of your body.

This therapy is most suitable for those contemplating serious consequences like suicide, severe agitation and other irrational behavior.

This calms nerves and subdues their over-activity.

This treatment could require hospitalization in some cases.

### **Alternative Treatments**

These treatments include guided imagery, biofeedback, hypnosis, aromatherapy, yoga, meditation, acupuncture, massage, herbal remedies and other forms of relaxation.

These alternative treatments aim to relax your nerves by providing solace.

These may prove effective for treating mild depression.

These treatments are easy to practice at home.

### ***Herbal Therapy***

Although herbal therapy has been in use extensively in Europe for unipolar depression treatment, it is also recently being used in the United States.

However, herbal remedies may cause violent reactions with other normal drugs and antidepressants.

Always consult your doctor about prescribed dosage of antidepressant medications and what would be the best treatment option if you are thinking about starting to take herbal supplements.

Various herbs are claimed to sometimes counter unipolar depression symptoms effectively.

The most common among them is St. John's Wort. This herb is available from a bushy plant that has yellow blooms in summer.

Check with your doctor before getting anything containing any part of this plant.

### ***Support Groups***

Medications and therapy alone cannot always deliver desired results.

You can form or join support groups with people suffering from similar depression episodes. Spending time with such people, sharing each other's concerns, problems and doubts can make you feel better equipped to handle your own concerns.

### ***Lifestyle Changes***

Doctors suggest various lifestyle changes in conjunction with regular medications to combat unipolar depression. Such lifestyle changes include maintaining a brisk exercise schedule for a minimum of thirty minutes daily, quitting smoking, alcohol and drugs, and adhering to a disciplined lifestyle.

Adopting these changes after completing your regular treatment for depression can lower the chance of a relapse significantly.

Although treatment options do usually deliver desired results, there may be insufficient response in some cases.

Doctors and psychotherapists could then suggest a change of treatment option. Normally doctors watch you over a period of two to three months of treatment.

If results are unsatisfactory, you could shift to another course of treatment or you could take a second opinion of another doctor.

But, do not tax yourself too much. Any medication or treatment option needs time to turn things around and help you to get back to your earlier balanced life.

## 21. Unipolar Depression Medications - Antidepressants

Antidepressants are one type of pill that doctors prescribe to help unipolar depression. These pills do not guarantee immediate relief but they can put you on the path to recovery.

Antidepressants help your brain to achieve a proper chemical balance by regulating neurotransmitters.

Natural neurotransmitters, like norepinephrine and serotonin, are essential for normal brain functioning and control of routine activities like eating, sleeping and thinking.

Antidepressants increase the availability of these brain chemicals and thereby help to relieve you of your unipolar depression.

A normal course of treatment through antidepressants spreads over four to six months. Doctors decide on the necessary duration of antidepressants according to the severity and complexity of your unipolar depression.

Antidepressants include selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), tricyclics, and others antidepressants like mirtazapine, bupropion, nefazodone, trazodone, and venlafaxine.

SSRIs include drugs like fluoxetine, citalopram, escitalopram, paroxetine, and sertraline. These antidepressants act only on the neurotransmitter serotonin of your brain. These may cause a few side-effects like nausea, dry mouth, insomnia, nervousness, headache, fatigue, sexual problems and diarrhea.

Tricyclics are effective antidepressants. They take effect on both neurotransmitters like serotonin and norepinephrine and other body chemicals. Side effects of this antidepressant may include

constipation, tiredness, blurred vision, dry mouth, difficulty urinating, impaired thinking and worsening of glaucoma. They could also affect your blood pressure and heart beat.

Antidepressants can affect the effectiveness of other medications you may be taking. Some could cause adverse reactions.

Certain antidepressants could trigger serious reactions with certain beverages and foods.

Sometimes antidepressants could trigger over-stimulation of serotonin receptors. It could result in mental confusion, hyperactivity, shivering, fever, sweating, poor coordination, diarrhea and seizures. There should always be a gap of more than two weeks before changing to a new antidepressant.

Although antidepressants are effective medications for unipolar depression, proper treatment requires that they be combined with counseling sessions.

Different people react differently to antidepressants. No single medication can prove effective for all. Therefore, doctors test the suitability of the medication before prescribing it for your long-term use.

Sometimes, doctors may prescribe you to be on certain mild antidepressants for life.

## 22. Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a recommended form of treatment for patients with severe unipolar depression. Psychiatrists prescribe this treatment usually after other medications and therapies do not deliver the desired effect. This therapy has a success rate of 80%.

ECT can be administered during a hospital stay or you can undergo treatment and return home. A normal course includes three sittings per week with a maximum of twelve treatment sessions.

ECT involves use of controlled electric current of 0.9 ampere to induce a shock to your brain. Passing such a current could cause an artificial seizure. Psychiatrists administer you a general anesthesia before start of treatment.

Anesthesia induces you into a sleep-like state. You are also given a muscular relaxant. Doctors watch your vital functions closely.

Although the electric current causes your brain to experience a seizure for one or two seconds, specific medicines control its effect on your body.

You awaken five to ten minutes after the treatment. It takes little time for you to recover completely.

Common side effects of ECT may include nausea, temporary short-term memory loss, headache and muscle aches. In some cases, it could cause changes in heart rhythms and blood pressure.

Doctors keep a watch for these and administer treatment immediately if necessary. After completing all the sittings of a full course of ECT treatment, psychiatrists could put you on



antidepressants to achieve long-term relief from unipolar depression.

## **23. Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR)**

Eye Movement and Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) technique is a relatively new concept for treating unipolar depression. Dr. Francine Shapiro, a psychologist at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California created this technique in 1987. It involves use of rapid eye movements with proper guidance to cure emotional causes of unipolar depression.

Normally, people with unipolar depression exhibit varied and intense feelings of anxiety, depression, obsessions, flashbacks, panic attacks, nightmares and restlessness together with severe disorders like sleep disturbances, eating disorders and, in extreme cases, suicidal intentions.

EMDR may help you to combat these problems and overcome your unipolar depression.

EMDR works by coordinating specific parts of your brain. Once any traumatic event occurs, it remains registered in a specific part of your brain permanently. The entire picture remains in a frozen frame. Often you experience emotional upsets when these thoughts, feelings, sounds and upsets are triggered due to any cause. However, in another part of your brain, you always try your best to resolve and forget these happenings. The absence of proper coordination between these brain parts causes depression. EMDR through fast eye movements and effective counseling tactics helps to resolve this deficiency.

EMDR treatment focuses on using your past happenings and your present condition to make way for your future. The treatment process first focuses on your position and condition at the time of the emotional upset. This is the root cause of your problem.

Next, the treatment tries to solve your emotional upsets in the past by attending to your present symptoms. This starts a specific healing process, which tries to put right your emotional quotient and prepares you to face a brighter future.

EMDR treatment involves various processes within the treatment plan. These processes consist of preparation and assessment phases according to individual requirements.

Then, you need to concentrate your eye movements on a moving object for fifteen to thirty seconds, while focusing on specific memories of your past. This coordinates your brain and eye functioning.

You may experience different feelings and responses during the process. Allowing things to move along while you concentrate without questioning the correctness or incorrectness of anything can improve the working and responses of your brain.

## 24. Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is one of the most common treatment options for unipolar depression.

It is also popular as talking therapy, where a patient talks and discusses problems with licensed and trained psychotherapist to find relief from most symptoms of depression.

Depression problems could also be hereditary.

Sometimes various chemical imbalances in your brain could trigger depression symptoms and manifest in deep behavioral problems.

### Need for Psychotherapy

Often, a major event like death, trauma, accident, divorce or loss of a job could cause severe disruptions in your emotional setup. This translates into depression.

It is essential to analyze the root cause for your unipolar depression to be able to suggest suitable remedies and prescribe necessary treatment.

Psychotherapy treatments help you get back your control over your life so that you are able to enjoy the basic pleasures in your life.

Psychotherapy treatments teach you various problem-solving skills and coping techniques.

### Types of Psychotherapy Treatments

Psychotherapy treatments can be in different modules:

Individual treatments include just you and your psychotherapist.

Group treatments include a small group of patients. Each of them could discuss their individual problems, share experiences and

provide solace. This makes each feel that they are not the only ones suffering from depression problems.

Couple treatments involve you and your spouse or partner. This helps the other person understand why you are suffering from depression and how best to provide help and comfort during difficult times.

Family treatments involve all family members together to learn how to deal effectively with depression problems of a family member.

### **Choice of Suitable Psychotherapy Treatment**

Your psychotherapist is the best person to judge and analyze the best treatment suitable for your condition.

Different approaches to psychotherapy include:

#### ***Psychodynamic therapy***

This therapy could last for a long period, even spreading over years. This therapy starts with the assumption that your depression problems are due to certain unresolved conflicts in childhood.

Your therapy, therefore, aims to help you understand and deal better with such childhood experiences and overcome all negative feeling associated with those past events.

#### ***Interpersonal therapy***

This therapy treatment deals with your poor relationships with friends and family members and depression that is the result of such poor relationships.

This therapy aims at improving your communication skills so that you are able to communicate better with other people. This treatment normally lasts for three to four months.

### ***Cognitive behavioral therapy***

This therapy aims at fixing your wrong self-assumptions. You develop depressive thoughts as you feel you are inferior to others and cannot stand on the same level with others in your age group or community.

Your therapist tries to establish the correct ways of thinking and removes wrong and irrelevant assumptions about yourself that form the base for your depression problems.

### **Useful Therapy Tip**

Analyzing the root cause of your depression problem could start your psychotherapy treatment. However, you should be consistent and try to put in the necessary effort and time so that your treatments deliver desired results.

## 25. Choosing a Psychotherapist

A psychotherapist is a trained medical professional. This professional can treat and offer remedial measures for your behavioral disorders.

When choosing a psychotherapist, you have to consider your comfort zone.

You should be able to talk and deal freely with your psychotherapist.

Therapists use various techniques to treat your behavioral symptoms. You can therefore choose a male or a female psychotherapist according to your preferences and ability to communicate easily.

Similarly, you could choose a therapist who can converse in a language you feel most comfortable with.

While discussing your depression problems with your psychotherapist, you can inquire in to their education qualifications and suitable treatment options.

You have to be honest while discussing your problems with your psychotherapist. Holding back information cannot get you anywhere. It will only compound your problems.

Psychotherapists have different levels of education and professional qualifications. A psychiatrist is a doctor who specializes in psychiatry.

Psychiatry is a specialized branch of study of depression problems and remedial measures. Psychiatrists can prescribe relevant medications for behavioral problems.

A psychiatric nurse practitioner has a master's level nursing degree with a state license. Such a nurse should have thirty hours of formal training in mental health conditions and be capable of suggesting necessary medications.

Normally, these nurses work with a psychotherapist to analyze your behavioral problems and review your medical condition from time to time.

A clinical psychologist should have a doctorate degree, relevant state license and supervised experience in dealing with depression patients.

A psychologist cannot prescribe medications, as a psychologist is not a medical doctor. Normally, psychologists work with a psychiatrist nurse practitioner or psychiatrist to discuss your depression problems and suggest suitable medications.

A licensed counselor or therapist has a master's degree in counseling and clinical psychology. Further, such a person has relevant experience and he should pass a state exam to receive the relevant license. A licensed counselor or therapist has training in different psychotherapy techniques.

Understanding the different categories of psychotherapists can help you choose the one who meets your requirements and suits your preferences.



## 26. Experimental Therapies

Experimental therapies are treatment procedures for depression problems, which doctors are uncertain over their effectiveness and safety because there has not yet been enough data produced. These therapies are not in regular use by doctors for treating depression problems.

Experimental therapies include vagus nerve stimulation, hormone replacement therapy in women, and transcranial magnetic stimulation.

Vagus nerve stimulation uses electrical pulses to stimulate the vagus nerve, the main nerve that controls depression and moods. This therapy involves implantation of a tiny device in your chest, connected to electrodes for necessary stimulation. This treatment is common among epileptic patients. Doctors may use this treatment in depression patients if no more common treatment techniques are yielding any benefits.

Hormone replacement therapy in women can provide relief to various mood changes taking place during menstrual periods, perimenopause and post menopause. These periods involve drastic changes in hormone levels that may cause severe depression and other problems like hot flashes and night sweats.

Transcranial magnetic stimulation is also popularly known as repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation. This technique involves placing an electromagnet on the head to induce electrical currents within your brain. These induced currents may change and stimulate better activity within the brain. This may alleviate depression. This technique is claimed to have few side effects. This technique is a

relatively new concept and studies are still ongoing to understand its long-term benefits and effects.

## 27. Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)

Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) is a technique that makes use of a powerful electromagnet to change brain activities. This is a non-invasive technique.

Doctors place an electromagnet on your scalp. This induces an electromagnetic current in the underlying cortical neurons. This affects functioning of the cortical neurons.

Varying intensities and changing frequencies of this electromagnet can produce currents of different intensities. These are claimed to correct excessive or low stimulation levels within the brain. This technique may become very useful in treating patients with depression.

Side effects of TMS are claimed to be very few and rare. In some cases, it could cause epileptic seizures. These side effects may be more common in patients with a family history of epileptic seizures.

Each TMS session could last for half an hour. You can undergo daily sessions for a fortnight.

Depressed individuals have low brain activity. The electromagnetic pulses help stimulate and increase brain activity. It may be easier for some patients to tolerate TMS than other forms of treatment for depression.

TMS technique is claimed to score better over other forms of depression treatments like ECT and VNS. Its supporters say that this treatment not only improves depression in people, it also improves the quality of different parts of brain thereby stimulating better memory and reasoning abilities.

TMS is claimed to be very successful in patients with post-trauma depression, schizophrenia, speech problems, brain hyperactivity problems and other problems associated with regional hypo-metabolism.

## 28. Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS)

Vagus nerve stimulation (VNS) is a system that gives intermittent stimulations to the vagus nerve in the brain for thirty seconds at five-minute intervals.

This consists of an implantable pulse generator, lead, and an external programming system. Implantation of a vagus nerve stimulation device takes about an hour.

Surgeons make a small incision in your neck and collarbone to implant this battery-operated device. A flexible and insulated plastic tube with electrodes is also placed under the skin near to the vagus nerve.

The generator delivers electric shocks to your vagus nerve. These restrict emotional disturbances.

Your brain has many nerve cells that communicate with electric currents. Imbalances in regular electrical activity in the brain may cause emotional problems.

These electric shocks through stimulation of the vagus nerve may restrict these imbalances and control your emotional episodes.

VNS is more popular in treating people with partial seizures. The vagus nerve is one of the twelve cranial nerves in brain. This nerve not only coordinates body and mind movements, it also affects mood levels in your brain.

So, stimulating this nerve may regulate and bring changes in mood dysfunctions.

A VNS device is claimed to be a better alternative to Electroconvulsive therapy.

Risks and possible complications due to VNS include difficulty in swallowing, hoarseness, injury to carotid artery, and possible chances of infection at the place of implantation of the device.

## 29. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Hormone replacement therapy is artificial induction of estrogen and progestin in women. Estrogen and progesterone are female hormones and their falling levels during perimenopause may cause various emotional upsets leading to depression.

This therapy aims to reduce the effects of such falling hormone levels and improving depression problems.

Mood changes are common in midlife. These changes, coupled with falling hormone levels, may cause serious depression problems for many women.

Observations and studies indicate that, if perimenopause and post menopause women are on estrogen therapy for six weeks, there is a significant fall in their depression episodes and they are more socially active.

Menopausal women caring for an ill relative, spouse or parent also may experience serious depression problems. Such women are claimed to be in a better emotional state after receiving hormone replacement therapy.

They report fewer hostilities and fewer ill feelings after the therapy.

However, there is no conclusive evidence that hormone replacement therapy can deliver the desired results and bring a definite, marked improvement in mental health. Although studies indicate promising results, they are not convincing or final.

Men also experience depressing symptoms due to falling hormone levels as they age. Men can find little relief through testosterone

replacement therapy. Further, there is may be a risk of cancer associated with hormone replacement therapy.

So, you should weigh the benefits and risks before starting with hormone replacement therapy for treating depression.



### **30. Alternative Remedies for Unipolar Depression**

Presently, traditional doctors and physicians are more open to the use of alternative remedies and therapies for treating unipolar depression.

They may prescribe such remedies in addition to their regular course of therapy treatment for depression.

It seems a positive development that traditionalists are now recognizing that traditional medicine cannot always cure or prove to be a remedial measure for all types of ailments.

Some are giving consideration to alternative remedies in treatment of unipolar depression.

#### **Demand for Alternative Remedies**

Of late, some depression patients prefer and are on the lookout for alternative remedies for treating unipolar depression problems.

They may feel that traditional medicines are not able to deliver desired results.

Traditional medications for treating unipolar depression, like antidepressants and drugs, may have many serious side effects.

These side effects often incapacitate you so that you are unable to manage your regular duties independently.

Alternative remedies like herbal remedies are claimed to have fewer side effects.

This may help you carry on with your normal duties while on medication.

Alternative remedies may be less expensive. Prescriptions drugs and other treatments for unipolar depression are very expensive and could be beyond the reach of most people.

The popularity of alternative remedies is increasing, as more and more people are reaching out for these remedies to try to help with their depression problems.

### **Types of Alternative Remedies**

Alternative remedies cover a wide range of therapies and medications.

These include:

#### ***Herbal - St. John's Wort***

This is a very common remedy for treating unipolar depression. This herbal remedy comes from a plant of the same name.

It is available in the form of capsule, tablet, oil, and liquid extract. This herbal remedy is very common in European countries in treatment of the mild to moderate depression. Presently, it is becoming popular among most Americans for treating depression problems. It takes time to deliver effects. This herbal medicine is available across most health foods stores.

#### **\*Warning\***

**Pregnant women should not contact St John's Wort at all. Everyone should consult their psychotherapist and doctor before even considering that they might get this herbal preparation.**

St. John's Wort can react with other antidepressant medications. It could even reduce their effects. It reacts strongly with other antidepressant medications like SSRIs, tricyclics, and MAOIs.

Common side effects of St. John's Wort include fatigue, dizziness, dry mouth, constipation, restlessness, stomach disorders, increased sensitivity to sun and allergic reactions.

### ***Herbal -5-Hydroxy-Tryptophan (5-HTP)***

This is a natural antidepressant available from the seeds of the Griffonia Simplicifolia plant. This is normally available in a capsule form.

It is claimed to help increase serotonin levels in the brain but there is no conclusive evidence.

Some herbalists prescribe this for treating mild to moderate depression.

Common side effects include constipation, nausea, gas, decreased sexual desire, drowsiness and heartburn.

### ***Herbal - Ginkgo***

This herbal extract is claimed to be effective at treating depression, especially in elderly patients.

Such patients are extremely resistant to drug therapies and may not find any relief from antidepressants.

Ginkgo extracts are claimed to be useful in treating such people with overall cognitive functioning systems claimed to record a marked improvement after use of ginkgo extracts.

### ***Herbal - Kava***

This herb has excellent calming properties. It also elicits a feeling of contentment and peace. This herbal remedy is very popular among South Pacific islanders for treating depression symptoms.

**CAUTION: Products containing Kava were restricted or banned by Australian authorities a few years ago after negative findings in coronial enquiries.**

### ***Herbal - Rhodiola Rosea***

This herb is prevalent in regions with cold climates. It is claimed to improve levels of beta-endorphins and monoamines in extra cellular body parts. This is claimed to cause an appreciable fall in depression levels and reduces fatigue.

## **2. Vitamin Supplements**

A normal balanced diet should ideally contain all essential vitamins and minerals. Yet, vitamin deficiencies occur due to improper food choices and this may result in serious problems. Therefore, vitamin supplements may be needed to help you meet your deficiency and overcome depression problems arising due to lack of necessary vitamins.

It is wrong to think that a high dose of vitamins will yield extra benefits. That could prove harmful. Always follow your physician's advice on essential dosage of vitamin as supplements or from other sources.

### ***B-vitamins***

Serotonin is a natural neurotransmitter. Adequate levels of this neurotransmitter are essential to maintain proper mental health. Lack of essential vitamins could cause serious depletion in serotonin levels and thereby cause depression.

Taking vitamin supplements may set right your depression problems. B-vitamins, as present in niacin, riboflavin, vitamin B6, thiamin, pantothenic acid, and vitamin B12 are claimed to be good supplements.

You can also choose to get necessary vitamins through special diets. Fish, lean meat, wheat germ, brewer's yeast, cooked dried beans, soybeans, and peas are rich in B6. Meat, dairy products, and brewer's yeast contain B2.

### ***Magnesium***

Low magnesium levels may cause psychological changes like depression. Low levels of this vitamin may cause severe memory loss, insomnia, fear, restlessness, dizziness and attention problems. Magnesium supplements of 200-400 mg each day are claimed to bring substantial changes in depression levels.

### ***Omega 3 Fatty acids***

These are claimed to be very effective against depression. They are available naturally in fresh sardines, flax seeds, hemp seeds, walnuts, canola oil and salmon.

Omega 3 fatty acid supplements are available in oil or capsule form.

### ***Tryptophan***

Tryptophan is an amino acid that is claimed to relieve depression symptoms. Consuming foods rich in this amino acid may provide some relief from depression symptoms. Tryptophan-rich foods include whole-grain cereals, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, lean meats and fish.

You should eat these tryptophan-rich foods with carbohydrates like rice, pasta, or potatoes for easy assimilation of this essential amino acid.

## **Exercise**

Regular exercise boosts serotonin levels in your body and you are more likely to feel happy and contented. It may increase the blood flow to your brain and help reduce your mental stress.

You can follow any exercise pattern like walking, swimming, jogging, aerobics, or play a game.

Yoga and meditation may also calm your nervous system and reduce restlessness immensely. Yogic postures improve your breathing patterns and increase intake of oxygen. This may improve your blood circulation and boosts your muscular system. Meditation may improve your concentration powers and reduces mental stress levels. This is claimed to lower the occurrence of unipolar depression.

Consult your doctor before beginning yoga or any other form of exercise. Some people are injured each year from subjecting their unfit bodies to the strains of yoga positions

### **Aromatherapy**

This therapy involves the use of specific herbal oils that are claimed to relax and revive your nervous system.

These oils are primarily floral and citrus oils. Floral oils include rose, geranium, jasmine, Melissa, ylang ylang, and neroli while citrus oils include lime, bergamot, mandarin, and grapefruit.

You can use them in your bath or inhale them to test whether they will help you to reduce depression levels.

### **Diet Modification**

Develop healthy dietary habits to help you to get relief from depression.

Some foods affect your moods intensely. Foods you should avoid include processed foods, foods with high sugar content, alcohol, and caffeine.

Consuming protein-rich foods like chicken, turkey, and fish can improve your moods. These are claimed to increase your energy levels and reduce fatigue.

### **Acupuncture**

This is a traditional Chinese healing technique. It makes use of very tiny needles to activate specific points in your body. This therapy is intended to focus on releasing blocked energy at important body points and allowing energy to flow freely within your body. Releasing blocked energy is claimed to relieve you of depression and improve your general health.

### **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

This therapy focuses on intense talking therapy sessions to combat your depression problems. Talking with a therapist can help you relate to what causes your depression.

Therapists suggest suitable remedies and regulate your flow of thoughts constructively. This helps you to overcome your depression without use of antidepressants and other drugs.

### **Light Therapy**

This therapy is most suited for treating seasonal depression problems. Often, such problems are said to occur due to insufficient light in winter.

The therapy exposes you to bright fluorescent light that seems the same as a bright sunny day. This is claimed to cause many chemical changes in your body and brain and increase serotonin levels. You may find some relief from depression.

### **Be Careful when Using Alternative Remedies**

Most alternative remedies are from natural sources. There is a common belief is that anything from nature is safe and cannot be harmful.

Some traditional medicines are proving to be very unsafe and are being recalled from the market.

Not all herbal remedies may be safe. Some plants are poisonous and other plants or herbs could cause problems.

You should take only specifically prescribed and tested herbs for help with unipolar depression problems.



### 31. Acupuncture and Reflexology

Acupuncture is a very old form of traditional Chinese medicine. It involves applying pressure in a set technique at specific body points to allow regulated movement of body energy. This easy flow of energy is claimed to stimulate normal flow of emotions and relieves physical pain associated with emotional upsets or unipolar depression.

Reflexology is the application of pressure at designated points on your body. Reflexologists insist that these points correspond to specific body parts and organs. Massaging and applying pressure at these points through proper acupuncture techniques is claimed to help release tension and prevents blockage of energy. They say that this stimulates the free flow of blood throughout your body.

Some believe restrictions in free blood flow lead to formation of crystals consisting of lactic acid deposits and that stimulation through acupuncture and reflexology helps dissolve these lactic acid deposits and regularize your blood flow.

Reflexology is claimed to identify specific points in your foot that relate to specific body parts and organs. The inside of your foot is said to refer to your pineal gland while the center of your foot is said to refer to your thymus and the point underneath your big toe to your thyroid and parathyroid glands.

Massaging these pressure points related to the specific glands is claimed to improve your mental health and emotional stability, as these glands are part of what determine your emotional health.

Reflexology is a relaxing experience. Combining acupuncture and reflexology is claimed by some to get you the best treatment for curing depression problems.

## 32. Exercise and Yoga

### Exercise

Exercise is a good way of maintaining your physical health and improving your mental health. A simple routine of brisk exercises stretching over half an hour can lighten your mood. Your exercise can be brisk walking, stretching exercises, or any other form of suitable exercise.

Exercise has definite therapeutic effect on depressed people. It can make you mentally stronger to better overcome your trauma and lower your anxiety levels.

Exercise makes you feel more energetic and better equipped to handle everything. It can improve the quality of your sleep.

Maintaining a regular schedule of exercise can make you feel motivated and develop higher self-confidence.

Depression medications may give you relief but it is normally for a short period. Exercise may help to deliver long-term relief from depression problems.

### Yoga

Different yogic postures and meditation are claimed to improve all body systems:

- ✓ stimulates blood circulation,
- ✓ tones your nervous system,
- ✓ improves concentration levels, and
- ✓ makes your feel more energetic in body and mind.

Depression often causes extreme lethargy. Yoga can bring marked improvements in such lethargy by stimulating blood circulation.

Make yoga a part of your daily life. Spend a minimum of thirty minutes in meditation and twenty minutes doing different yogic postures.

Yoga also includes different breathing exercises. These breathing exercises help control your inhalation and exhalation. Such control of your breathing may help to tone your muscles extensively and help you to become fitter over time.

## Part-VI: Coping with Unipolar Depression

### 33. Effects of Untreated Unipolar Depression

Unipolar depression basically affects your mental health. But, if left untreated, it might cause serious upsets to your physical health and mental stability.

If you have depression problems, you may be more likely to suffer major setbacks in your physical health like strokes and heart attacks. And, recovering from such illnesses may takes more time.

A stressed mind often makes it difficult to enjoy undisturbed and deep sleep. If you suffer from unipolar depression, you could also suffer from insomnia.

Lack of sufficient sleep makes you lethargic and excessively tired. You become irritable and find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions.

You wake up at odd hours and then find it difficult to fall asleep again.

Poor sleep patterns lower your immunity levels and your physical ability to fight infection. You could become more easily susceptible to all types of infections.

Your depressed state of mind does not prompt you to look for proper medical care. Even if you get the necessary medical care, you may be less likely to follow your doctor's advice or treatment schedules diligently.

Depression is claimed to sometimes be a cause for development of alcoholic and drug habits in men and teenaged boys. Alcohol and drug abuse lower your sustenance and inhibition levels drastically.

You may start contemplating suicidal thoughts. Sometimes, you also try to attempt suicide to put an end to your unhappy life.

Depression and regular use of abuse substances could put distance between you and your friends and relatives.

You could also suffer from loss of memory and indulge in extensive self-pity.

Depression can mar your family life irreparably, leading to divorce, with separation of parents and children.

The children may then also develop depression early in life due to the trauma.

Unipolar depression, if untreated, may help to cripple much of what's worthwhile in your life.

You could suffer from poor social and professional experiences.

Untreated depression may indirectly cause extensive losses to the economy of a whole country.

Employers should offer employee assistance programs and proper medical benefits for employees to take good care of their health and remain productive all their working years.

### 34. Depression and Thoughts of Suicide

Unipolar depression often incites suicidal thoughts.

These thoughts arise in a depressed person, as they have poor control over their emotions. Depression makes you feel hopeless and unhappy about everything in life.

So, you could get to feel that ending your life is the best way to escape all depressing thoughts.

Depression makes a person very negative and disinterested in life. You are unable to see all the real positives around you.

You feel there is no end or solution to all your problems. This induces an oppressive sadness and an unrelenting dull and pessimistic atmosphere.

You may feel there is no relief from this boundless sorrow. You find sadness, hopelessness, and despair all around. Therefore, you feel that death would put an end to all your sorrow and your very existence.

Although suicidal thoughts are a common symptom of high depression levels, suicide is never the solution. Suicide is an irreversible act.

No life is worthless and ending it would always cause harm or sorrow for those that you care about.

Death is always a sad event and your suicide would cause extreme pain and increased problems for all those who love you.

Thoughts of death and suicide often come across as fleeting thoughts in normal people after any major occurrence like a death

of a loved one or at any time that you feel your future looks very bleak and hopeless.

In depressed people, suicidal urges could be very high at the time when you are coming to grips with starting remedial therapy. You maybe reluctant to accept that therapy can bring positive influences in your life.

You may sometimes feel that taking any therapy is a waste of time. But, taking action while seeking support from family and friends and getting reliable information from counselors can help you overcome such feelings.

After taking few therapy sessions, you start feeling better and you can more easily push away suicidal thoughts.

They might reappear at any time in a depressed person. Even the slightest turn of events could trigger depressed thoughts and feelings.

But you can overcome them by sticking to your program and recognizing each improvement, however small, in your general condition. Then, suicidal thoughts or feelings cannot stay for long.

It is only a matter of time and some effort before you get back to your normal self-control and are able to handle all things properly and effectively.



## 35. How to Overcome the Depression

Depressed feelings may swarm in at any moment. Once depression sets in, you feel very low, dull, and pessimistic about everything.

You need to find and use some ways of coming out of this depression so that you are able to keep control your emotions.

In severe cases, professional help may be needed to help you come out of your depression blues. But, in less intense instances, you can help yourself and overcome your depression.

Depression often occurs if you are unable to meet your goals or deadlines. Always break your work into small and simple parts that you are able to complete and review before proceeding to the rest.

Prioritize your work and complete jobs according to their urgency and importance. This assures you that you are working on the most important work at any particular time.

So, you are capable of managing everything.

Exercise boosts your energy levels by increasing serotonin, which are natural neurotransmitters, in your brain.

You do not have to practice rigorous or extreme exercise schedules. Simple exercises can do the trick. Otherwise, participating in cultural and social events may also ease your mind. You feel better and free from depression after such activities.

Depression bouts bring with it many pessimistic thoughts and feelings. You may feel you are worthless and are in a hopeless situation.

You start forming and dwelling on all negative thoughts. It is essential to remember that negative thoughts are due to depression and these will fade away once you overcome your depression through proper treatment.

Physical exhaustion is often a prelude to depression. Maintain a healthy diet by consuming protein-rich foods and avoiding all foods that could trigger more depression symptoms.

Avoid alcohol, caffeine and sugary foods.

Also, stay away from non-prescribed drugs and do not attempt any self-medication.

Take adequate rest and allow your body to regain energy levels so that it becomes easier to overcome your depression.

Indulge yourself by going shopping, eating in a restaurant, going for a movie or do anything else that makes you feel happy and contented.

You can confide your depressive thoughts to a close friend or relative and you will feel better. These help you overcome your depression.

## 36. Cognitive Therapy for Depression

Cognitive therapy refers to a psychological way of dealing with depression. It is common to have various negative thoughts in times of depression.

Cognitive therapy helps you to analyze these thoughts and understand stress-causing factors.

You learn to have a positive approach at life and this boosts your self-confidence immensely over time.

Cognitive therapy functions by using correct behavioral techniques to change your perception of things. Cognitive therapists work by assuming that your depression problems are a result of certain unresolved conflicts in your mind and heart during your childhood.

Such conflicts could arise from traumatic events, disturbed childhood due to broken homes or separated parents, or any personal losses like loss of parent or any close relative in your childhood.

These are seen as the causes for improper development of necessary coping skills.

Cognitive therapy primarily deals with your behavioral aspects.

A therapist helps you to conduct a self-analysis to better understand and evaluate anything that you see as deficiencies.

This helps you to identify your problem points and possible causes for irrational behavior. Cognitive therapy then proceeds to using self-talk as the best tool to help you come out of your depression.

Self-evaluation by depressed persons normally concentrates on a negative assessment. You normally give more weight to your inabilities and deficiencies.

Cognitive therapists help you to analyze your behavioral patterns and understand and appreciate your abilities. This teaches you to manage your problems better.

Self-talk is a technique of voicing out your thoughts aloud but it does not necessarily mean you are talking to yourself. Your flow of thoughts help cognitive therapists to understand the problems behind your depression.

Therapists teach you how to develop positive self-talk so that you boost your self-confidence and make yourself mentally stronger.

Cognitive therapists hint at formation of various automatic thoughts in your mind. However, you should attempt to develop positive automatic thoughts to overcome your depression.

Positive thoughts improve your abilities to assess situation and meet challenges. You are able to push away negative feelings and interpret things positively.

This is essential to fight away depression.

### **37. How to Help a Depressed Person**

Depression is a mental illness and it often brings excessive aggression, negativity, and irritability with it. Depressed people therefore appear agitated and snap at the smallest pretext.

Dealing with and interacting with a depressed person requires extreme patience and understanding.

Depressed people often do not seek treatment. But, untreated depression is potentially harmful and unhealthy.

You should coax the depressed person into taking proper medical treatment. Dealing with a depressed person requires tact. You should manage your talk and actions in such a way that you endear yourself to them and they are more likely to agree to your suggestion of visiting a doctor.

Consult a registered psychologist or meet a psychologist available through referral. You should further encourage the depressed person to adhere to and work according to the advice of the psychologist.

Similarly, you should make sure that the depressed person takes their regular medications and practices all recommended coping techniques.

Sometimes, depressed people could harbor serious suicidal thoughts. These require immediate professional medical attention.

A depressed person requires constant support and company. It is best not to leave them alone at any time. You should have good cooperative abilities and be ready to do anything and everything that may be necessary.

None of the depression treatments deliver instant relief.

Rehabilitation of depressed people is a long process.

It takes time and you should have the necessary patience and the right approach to take proper care of the depressed person.

Take an active part of and a real interest in the life of the depressed person. Talk and listen to the person attentively.

Do not disparage his or her thoughts and feelings. A peep into the life of the depressed person can make you understand what he or she is going through.

You can invite or accompany a depressed person for walks, movies, or take part in other recreational activities like practicing hobbies, or in cultural activities.

Although a depressed person requires diversion of their thoughts, do not make many demands. Instead, allow him and her to feel free to come to you at any time and ask for whatever their requirements may be.

## **38. Dietary Supplements and Nutrition for Depression**

Your diet plays an important role in maintaining proper balance of body and mind. Lack of an adequate supply of essential nutrients in your diet could cause many chemical changes.

These changes might disturb the working of vital body systems. Such changes can trigger mental imbalances that translate into depression.

You should consume a well-balanced diet divided into three meals a day or, alternately, eat five small meals a day. All your meals should contain food items from the major food groups like carbohydrates, fats, and proteins.

Additionally, you should include adequate amount of vitamins and minerals in your diet so that there is complete balance in all types of food and there is an easy assimilation of all food.

### **Important and Nutritious Food**

#### ***Carbohydrates***

Carbohydrates are energy foods. Such foods make your brain produce more serotonin, which is a natural neurotransmitter.

Proper serotonin levels are required to maintain proper moods.

Carbohydrates are available from whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Complex carbohydrates offer a steady supply of energy to your body and mind.

Although sugary foods and refined flour also contain carbohydrates, they cannot provide a steady supply of energy.

Try to consume more whole grain cereals and similar foods rather than processed and sugary foods.

### ***Fats***

Fat in large quantities may prove harmful. However, small quantities of fat are essential for maintaining good health and proper brain functioning.

The absence of enough fat from your diet could cause serious mood swings and extreme irritability. Include fat that is available in milk, butter, oils, and dairy products.

### ***Proteins***

These are the bodybuilders. Proteins contain essential amino acids that influence mood changes. Tryptophan is an important amino acid and essential for the secretion of serotonin.

Important sources of tryptophan include meat, eggs, bananas and dairy products.

Another amino acid, tyrosine, helps the secretion of dopamine and nor-epinephrine. These neurotransmitters regulate your mood. Important sources of tyrosine include bananas, meat, dairy products and almonds.

Effective absorption of amino acids is possible if you combine carbohydrates and proteins when you eat. Carbohydrates release insulin, which carries sugar and amino acids to the brain.

Tryptophan does not require the help of insulin to enter your brain.

However, excess protein levels in body cannot secrete extra neurotransmitters. An excessively high protein diet could cause serious stress on your kidneys and liver.

### ***Vitamins and Minerals***

A deficiency of B-vitamins could cause depression. A multivitamin pill might meet your vitamin deficiency. But, you should have



vitamin supplements only in prescribed doses and as advised by your physician.

Low folate levels could trigger depression and produce poor response to antidepressant medications. Folic acid supplements may be one way to supply necessary folate.

Low calcium levels may trigger headaches, irritability, mood swings and excessive fatigue. Vitamin C supplements sometimes come with vitamin D help to help in easy assimilation.

Low levels of other minerals like magnesium, zinc and selenium can trigger depression symptoms.

Eat a balanced diet to get all essential vitamins and minerals in adequate quantities.

### 39. Where to Get Help for Depression

Depressed people can seek help and advice from qualified healthcare providers. As soon as you sense that you are not quite your normal self for some unknown reason, you should contact your family doctor for a thorough check-up.

Your doctor would be familiar with your medical history and any medications you are presently having for any ailments. So, your family doctor may be the best qualified person to deduce if you are having any serious depression problems or whether it might be an effect of any of your current medications.

Identification of any problem is essential for receiving proper medical treatment.

Your family doctor can then suggest a psychiatrist or psychologist to provide relevant specialized help for your depression problems.

Psychiatrists are licensed medical professionals. They are experts in psychotherapy and can prescribe necessary medications for treating mental illnesses.

Psychologists are trained medical professionals with doctorate degrees. They cannot prescribe medications for depression but can offer counseling sessions and carry out all types of psychological testing.

Physician assistants are medical healthcare givers trained to identify depression symptoms or psychiatric disorders.

Registered nurses are nurse practitioners. They have some specialized nursing training for treating mental and psychiatric disorders.

Social workers can also contribute by providing mental health services for diagnosis, treatment and prevention of different psychiatric illnesses.

Social workers work to enhance your quality of life and make the society a happier and healthier place to live.

There are special nurses for treating psychiatric or depressed people. These are psychiatric nurses. They are registered nurses that specialize in the nursing and treating of depressed patients.

You can locate good medical help for treatment of your depression problems from such places as:

- hospitals,
- community health centers,
- health maintenance organizations,
- hospital outpatient clinics and psychiatry departments,
- private clinics,
- employee assistance programs at your workplace,
- social agencies, and
- other local medical or psychiatric societies.

Alternatively, you may locate medical help by going through the Yellow Pages.

For emergencies, contact doctors available on emergency duty in hospitals. They can provide immediate medical help and direct you for further help or hospitalization.

**Part-VII: Frequently Asked Questions****40. Frequently Asked Questions  
about Unipolar Depression*****What is depression?***

Depression is a mental illness. It can have various levels of seriousness depending on your symptoms and intensity.

***What are the possible causes for depression?***

Depression could be triggered by an upsetting event such as the death of spouse or a loved one. Sad and stressful events like divorce or separation could induce depression.

It could be hereditary.

It can be due to certain traumatic events like rape, sexual abuse, or any other abuse in childhood.

Sometimes serious illnesses and specific medications for curing these illnesses could induce depression symptoms.

Substance abuse and social exclusion could also cause depression.

***Can depression affect children?***

Yes, children are at equal risk to develop depression as older people. More than 2.5% of children in the US suffer from depression problems.

Changes in physical health, hereditary factors, special events, chemical changes in their bodies and their living environment may induce depression.

***Does depression affect children in the same way as adults?***

Depression in children shows differently than in adults. Depression in children could cause changes in their normal life style and school habits.

It interferes with their regular play schedules, schoolwork, interaction with friends and family members and their other activities.

It may occur with other disorders in children like attention deficit disorder, conduct disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Sometimes these disorders tend to mask various symptoms of depression.

***Does excess or lack of sleep cause depression?***

Yes, disturbances in sleep patterns can cause depression. Personal problems could intensify this depression.

Sometimes, specific medications deprive you of your sleep. This could make you feel depressed. Chronic inability to sleep could also cause depression.

***Why do Women have a higher probability of getting depression?***

Women not only report a higher incidence of depression but also have a higher probability of suffering from it.

This could be due to frequent changes in hormone levels in women. Women experience distinct changes in hormone levels during menstruation, menstrual disorders, pregnancy, childbirth, miscarriage, perimenopause, menopause and hysterectomy.

***Do all depressed people commit suicide?***

No, just a few depressed people actually commit suicide. However, some claim that thirty to seventy percent of depressed people try to commit suicide.

In most suicide attempt cases, patients are under severe depression and could be suffering from multiple medical problems that could be the main reasons for their attempt at suicide, rather than just depression.

***What is the duration of a depression episode?***

Depression episodes could last for more than two weeks and may continue for months. Seasonal depression occurs primarily during winter months.

Some depression episodes could last for years.

There is no specific duration for a depression episode.

***Does a person who had depression, experience it again?***

If you have had an episode of depression, you may or may not experience it again.

Having had an episode may not increase your chances of suffering from a major depression attack again.

Proper treatment is essential to maintain your health and help you recover so that you are better prepared to combat symptoms that might recur.

## **Just One More Thing.**

I hope this book will help you deal with the depression that affects your own life or that of people that you care deeply about.

I've tried to give you the best and latest information that I could find and make it easy to understand even if you have no special knowledge or qualifications.

Research, funded by governments and pharmaceutical companies, is adding to our knowledge about depression so fast that even a ebook cannot keep pace.

Please consult your doctor and other qualified support for the most current information and advice which they can tailor to your particular medical history and circumstances.

And, never hold back any information from them about yourself or your symptoms. The smallest thing can sometimes be of great help in shortening the time that a course of treatment takes.

Stephanie Mallet 2008

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