

Understanding Dysthymia



You know something is wrong. You feel tired and sad most of the time. In fact, you don't seem to enjoy life much at all anymore. Nothing you do makes you feel better for very long. If this sounds like you, know that there is hope. You may have a mood disorder called dysthymia. This condition is not something you can just "snap out of." Talk with your healthcare provider about treatments that can help.

What is dysthymia?

Dysthymia is a mild form of depression that may continue for years. It's also known as persistent depressive disorder or dysthymic disorder. More women than men have dysthymia. It's not known just what causes this disorder. It's not as severe as other types of depression. But it does affect your well-being. You may have trouble with work or school. Your relationships with friends and family may suffer. You may miss much of life's beauty and pleasure. If you have this disorder, you likely:

- Have been depressed most days for at least 2 years
- Have 2 or more other symptoms of depression

How is it treated?

Your healthcare provider may recommend therapy (counseling), medicines, or both. Just talking to a therapist may be a great relief. Your therapist can help you learn how best to cope with problems. And how to make positive changes in your life. Certain medicines may also be an option. These can help you feel less depressed. Eating a healthy diet, improving your sleep, and getting plenty of exercise also may help. So will having the support and care of those closest to you.

How daily issues affect your health

Many things in your daily life impact your health. This can include transportation, money problems, housing, access to food, and child care. If you can't get to medical appointments, you may not receive the care you need. When money is tight, it may be difficult to pay for medicines. And living far from a grocery store can make it hard to buy healthy food.

If you have concerns in any of these or other areas, talk with your healthcare team. They may know of local resources to assist you. Or they may have a staff person who can help.

Symptoms of depression

- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Feeling tired all the time
- Feeling restless
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Having trouble thinking clearly or making decisions
- Feeling hopeless
- Moving or speaking more slowly

- Thinking about death and suicide

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