



Orange County Migraine & Headache Center

Susan Hutchinson, M.D.

Board Certified in Headache Medicine

DEPRESSION

Depression affects about 19 million adults in the United States at any given time. An estimated 10% of patients who are seen by primary care physicians have depression. However, 65-70% of those cases go unrecognized. Women suffer from depression at a ratio of 2:1 compared to men. Women have hormonal triggers to depression, including the shift in hormones at the end of the menstrual cycle; post-partum and perimenopause/menopause. It is Dr. Hutchinson's belief that the treatment of depression in women must take into account the hormonal status of the patient.

Several screening tools are used to diagnose depression. Dr. Hutchinson likes to use the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9), a nine-item, self-administered evaluation that asks 9 questions. The questionnaire is as follows:

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
4. Feeling tired or having little energy
5. Poor appetite or overeating
6. Feeling bad about yourself - that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite - being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or hurting yourself in some way.

Note: the options for answering the above are: not at all; several days; more than half the days; nearly every day. It is common for all of us to have an occasional "down" day but the more persistent the symptoms, the more likely that there is an underlying depression.

There are varying degrees of depression. Many depressed individuals still get up every morning; go to work; pay their bills; and pick up their kids from school. However, they feel they are just "going through the motions" and lack any joy in

Address:
PO Box 54726
Irvine, CA 92619

Phone:(949) 861-8717
Fax:(949) 861-8719
Email: drhutchinson@ocmigraine.org
WWW.OCMIGRAINE.ORG

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their life. They have a sense they don't care about anything. A tip-off for depression could also be not enjoying things one normally did like gardening; jogging; golfing or socializing with friends.

In most cases of depression, treatment includes both medication and therapy/counseling. How long a patient needs treatment, either with medication or counseling, varies greatly. Effective treatment and higher quality of life are realistic goals for most patients with depression.

Prepared by:
Susan Hutchinson, M.D.
Director - Orange County Migraine & Headache Center
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