

NEWS BY YOU

Women should know depression's warning signs

Therapy, medication combine in treatment

Submitted by Shawn Thiele, deputy CEO for Magellan Health Services of Arizona, manager of Central Arizona's (Maricopa County and parts of Pinal County) Regional Behavioral Health Authority since 2007.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. It's an opportune time to assess both your physical and mental health.

One of the most common forms of mental illness that women experience is depression. Of course, every woman experiences times when she feels sad or down. But, if for more than two weeks the following symptoms occur, it might signal major depression:

» Persistent sad, anxious or empty

feelings.

» Feelings of hopelessness, and/or pessimism.

» Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and/or helplessness.

» Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex.

» Fatigue and decreased energy.

» Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions.

» Insomnia, waking up during the night, or excessive sleeping.

Major depression occurs twice as frequently in women as it does in men. It's a persistent state that can negatively affect a person's physical health and how they think, behave and perform day-to-day activities.

Depression is the most commonly recognized mental-health problem in women. The bad news is that it's grossly underdiagnosed. The good news? It's a treatable medical illness.



Shawn Thiele is deputy CEO for Magellan Health Services of Arizona.

While it's not known what causes depression, it's known that genetics, brain chemistry and hormones play a role. Beyond those, many factors contribute to depression. They include environment, biological predisposition, stressful events, abuse, and lack of support and connection.

Treatment for depression can include counseling, psychotherapy or medications and combinations of all of these. The key is to find the right combination of treatment that works. Through counseling and therapy, a person can learn to change his or her thoughts to feel better. Medications called antidepressants can help normalize neurotransmitters — which might

also contribute to recovery. Visit a physician and discuss the symptoms in order to develop an effective treatment plan.

If it's not you, but someone you love who is showing signs of depression, you can help. Make sure they seek professional help and "be there" for them by listening carefully without denying their feelings or judging them. Be sure to offer them hope — treatment works. Engage them in activities and refer them to resources such as www.magellanofaz.com, www.oneinfour.info and their physician or health-care professional.

If you want to learn how you can help intervene when someone has symptoms of depression, or how you can help in a behavioral-health crisis, Magellan offers free mental health first-aid training. Visit www.magellanofaz.com to learn more.

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