

WELLNESS TIPS

MANAGING DEPRESSION WHILE IN MED/PA SCHOOL

Thursday, October 8 is National Depression Screening Day

If you are struggling and suspect you might be depressed, you may also be feeling alone, that other students are doing well as they manage the numerous stressors related to school and the pandemic. But studies have shown that 27% of students in medical school have depression or depressive symptoms. You are not the only one in the UI CCOM.

Thoughts of self-blame and the belief that one should just try harder, in addition to stigma, can result in delay in seeking treatment or not receiving treatment at all.

Depression is an illness that should be taken seriously. And it is treatable.

Symptoms of depression include:

1. Depressed mood nearly every day.
2. Decreased interest or pleasure in activities
3. Weight change or change in appetite
4. Change in sleep patterns
5. Decreased energy, feeling slowed down
6. Restlessness, irritability
7. Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
8. Decreased concentration or ability to make decisions
9. Feeling hopeless or pessimistic
10. Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts

Major depression is diagnosed when symptoms are present for at least two weeks. Not everyone has the same symptoms and not all symptoms need to be present for a diagnosis. Symptoms of one type of depression, seasonal affective disorder, typically begin in late fall.

There are some things you can do to promote self-care if you are feeling depressed.

- Avoid isolating yourself. Maintain contact/talk with people who are supportive.
- Exercise has been shown to contribute to improved mood. Regular exercise is associated with decreased severity of symptoms and less consistent exercise is associated with improved mood up to 12 hours.
- Avoid making major decisions, especially impulsive ones, while depressed. Depression can impact your judgment. Or consult with others who you trust.

- Take care of your physical health. Mental and physical health impact each other.
- Establish a daily routine to help keep you more active.
- Avoid using drugs and limit alcohol intake. Although some people use them to moderate symptoms, they can be harmful in the long-run and impair judgment.

Although these self-care activities can be helpful, **they aren't a substitute for evaluation and treatment by a health care professional** and consideration of treatment with medication and/or psychotherapy.

If you have questions or would like assistance in deciding your next step, schedule a confidential screening in the MSCC on Thursday, October 8, which is National Depression Screening Day, or another day if that isn't convenient. The MSCC is here to help.

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or are in crisis, there are several sources of immediate assistance:

MSCC during office hours (M – F, 8AM – 5PM). Call 319-335-8056 or walk in.

After MSCC hours:

- UIHC Psychiatry Resident on Call - 319-356-1616
- UI Department of Public Safety - 319-335-5022
- UIHC Emergency Treatment Center - 319-356-2233
- or dial 911

CommUnity Crisis Services has a crisis phone line 1-855-325-4296

National Institute of Mental Health. "Depression Basics."

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression/index.shtml>

JAMAnetwork.com. "Prevalence of Depression, Depressive Symptoms, and Suicidal Ideation."

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2589340>

Health.com "10 No Cost Strategies to Fight Depression." March 1, 2011.

<https://www.health.com/condition/depression/10-no-cost-strategies-to-fight-depression>

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