



## News Release

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### **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW REGARDING DEPRESSION**

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Everyone from time to time experiences temporary feelings of sadness, frustration, irritability, stress, and fatigue as part of the normal ups and downs of daily life. When five or more of the following symptoms are present most of the time for at least two weeks and at least one of the symptoms experienced is depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure in one's usual activities, it is a sign that you may be depressed. The symptoms must cause significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Depression is a medical condition that affects persons regardless of age, race, socio-economic group, belief systems or gender. It can impact you, a family member, friend or coworker. It is not a sign of personal weakness or lack of will power. It is not a reason for shame. Rather, it is a medical condition like diabetes or high blood pressure. And like these conditions, depression can and should be treated.

Depression can affect your feelings, physical health, thoughts and/or your behavior. You can begin to feel overwhelmed. Symptoms may be relatively mild to severe. The most common signs and symptoms of depression are:

- ◆ Feelings of sadness
- ◆ Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- ◆ Fatigue or loss of energy
- ◆ Changes in weight or appetite

- ◆ Sleeping too little or too much
- ◆ Noticeable restlessness or decreased activities
- ◆ Inability to concentrate or remember things or difficulty making decisions
- ◆ Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- ◆ Thoughts of death or suicide

Persons become depressed for a variety of reasons. Depression may be caused by or occur with some medical conditions such as heart problems, stroke or hypothyroidism. Certain prescription medications for treating conditions like high blood pressure, life events such as the death of a family member, divorce, loss of a job or substance abuse may also contribute to depression. Persons with a family history of depression are more likely to suffer from this condition but not everyone with such a predisposition will become depressed. Also, depression may affect someone who doesn't have a family history. Biochemical imbalances that involve neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine may result in depression. Why depression occurs is not nearly as important as recognizing the symptoms and promptly seeking assistance. The first step is to arrange for an assessment by a qualified clinician. This can be obtained at no charge through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Your EAP representative is a doctoral-level mental health clinician experienced in doing such evaluations and helping you to develop an effective treatment plan. Depression not only affects the person suffering from the disease but also has a rippling effect on family, friends and coworkers. Others may experience anger, frustration, or fail to understand the changes a depressed individual is exhibiting. Other employees may become upset because the depressed person is missing work or their performance has declined. Employees suffering from depression may exhibit problems concentrating and difficulty making decisions. Also, uncharacteristic lateness, safety problems or accidents, crying spells, complaints of being tired all the time, frequent complaints of unexplained aches and pains, lack of cooperation, morale problems, and alcohol and/or drug abuse are indications that a staffer may be suffering from depression.

## SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

Suicide can be a possibility for a person suffering from depression. Do not assume that just because they are or are not talking about it that it will not happen. Be aware of the following signs:

- ◆ The person is discussing suicide openly or is making specific plans to commit suicide
- ◆ The person is getting all of their affairs in order
- ◆ The person may give away treasured belongings
- ◆ The person has made references such as “the world would be a better place if I weren’t around” or “I wish I could just disappear”
- ◆ The person may make vague references to not being around for an activity that they had planned and were looking forward to attending
- ◆ The person may make an effort to contact individuals as a way of saying goodbye to them

If you think someone may be contemplating suicide, ask them. Asking this question will not cause someone to do so. If they say “yes,” encourage them to get help on a voluntary basis immediately. If the person does not seek assistance, do not keep it a secret. You can call your EAP, local crisis line or 9-1-1 for further guidance and direction.

The key to recovery is to seek treatment. The first step is to contact your EAP so that a comprehensive assessment may be done and treatment recommendations made. Remember that the EAP is available to all employees and dependents of companies contracted with Wood & Associates for assessment, support and referral at no charge to you and/or your eligible family member. The EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### About Wood & Associates

Wood & Associates is an Employee Assistance Program and behavioral health consulting firm that helps employers maintain productivity, safety and behavioral health in the workplace. Wood & Associates is a pioneer in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

industry and has served employers and employees in the greater Tampa Bay area and nationwide since 1982. The firm's diverse group of clients includes a number of major employers who also contract for its mental health and substance abuse services.

Gary L. Wood, Psy.D., founder of the Wood & Associates consulting practice, is a pioneer in the field of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Since 1979, his practice has centered on providing solutions to employee and organizational problems. Wood is a licensed clinical psychologist, a member of the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, and a graduate of Rutgers University, West Georgia College and Mercer University.

Patricia N. Alexander earned a Ph.D. in mental health counseling at the University of Florida. Trained in critical incident stress management through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, she is a Florida Licensed Mental Health Counselor and nationally certified counselor. Through her work experience she has addressed all types of critical incident situations, including explosions, multiple homicides, suicides, line-of-duty deaths, serious accidents and robberies. Alexander conducts training on stress management for law enforcement and businesses, and has developed peer support programs for law enforcement and industry. Alexander is an educator and consultant on a wide variety of behavioral health concerns.