

# Feeling Sad

Feeling sad or unhappy is normal when something goes wrong. These feelings often go away with time and you feel better.

When these feelings occur each day and last for more than 2 weeks, get in the way of your ability to go to school or work, or affect your self-esteem, then it is important to get help.

## Signs

Use this list to mark any signs that you have had for 2 weeks or more:

- Loss of interest and pleasure in activities you have enjoyed
- Feeling sad, irritable, empty or down in the dumps
- Spending a lot of time alone
- Restless, not able to sit still or feeling slow
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Feeling hopeless
- Thoughts of death or harming yourself
- Changes in appetite, weight loss or weight gain
- Change in how you are sleeping, such as not sleeping or sleeping too much
- Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering, or making decisions
- Loss of energy or feeling tired all of the time
- Loss of interest in sex

If you have any of these signs for more than 2 weeks, talk to your doctor. You may have a health condition called depression. If you are thinking of harming yourself or others, seek help **right away** by going to a hospital emergency room.

## Your Care

The first step to feeling better is talking to someone who can help you. This might be a doctor, counselor or other mental health professional. Getting help early can shorten how long depression lasts, make it less serious and reduce the chance it will happen again. Your care may include medicine and counseling.

Here are things you can do that can help:

- Eat a healthy diet and avoid junk food.
- Stay active, even if you do not feel like it.
- Try to get 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Avoid being alone.
- Avoid stress if possible.
- Treat yourself with respect and kindness.

- Join a support group.
- Talk to clergy or spiritual leaders.
- Pray or meditate.
- Set a small goal each day that you can do, such as a small task or take a walk.
- Share your feelings with family or friends.
- Write your thoughts and feelings in a journal.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Think about joyful events in your life by looking at videos or photos.
- Plan to do something you enjoy each day.
- Do creative activities, such as drawing, painting and poetry.
- Avoid alcohol and street drugs.
- Ask your doctor about other ways to deal with sadness, such as medicine.
- Let your family and friends help you.

## Family and Friends Can Help

Helping someone get treatment is important. Your loved one may not have the energy or desire to ask for help.

Here are things you can do to help:

- Offer to go to the doctor with your loved one. You can ask questions and write down notes.
- Invite the person to go for walks or outings. Do not be discouraged if he or she says no. Continue asking, but do not push.
- Give emotional support by talking and careful listening.
- Give hope that he or she will feel better with time.
- **Do not ignore** words or actions that show the person thinks life is worthless. **Do not ignore** words or actions about hurting others. Seek help **right away** at a hospital emergency department.

**Talk to your doctor if you think you or a loved one has feelings of sadness that last for more than 2 weeks.**