

## DEPRESSION

Depression affects almost 10% of Canadians. The economic costs of depression are high and the human costs are incalculable. But there is help.



*No stigma anymore, but...*

*At one time, anyone with a depressive illness felt isolated, did not talk about it, and if they did it was in hushed whispers. Not anymore. Depression is so pervasive in our society today that it is discussed openly and treatment options abound. Unfortunately many people suffering from a depressive illness don't seek help right away.*

*There is an element of denial attached to the problem; a feeling that depression happens to others not to me. "I'll get through this on my own". It shouldn't be this way. Depression can destroy relationships and family life. It can play havoc with performance in the workplace. All this suffering is unnecessary because there are now medications and supportive therapies that can be used to ease the pain of depression and bring a sense of normalcy back to life.*

### WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

If you break your leg, you can't walk. In this case there has been a physical breakdown that prevents physical activity. Depressed people have a breakdown in the brain where the chemicals that fuel the brain allowing normal everyday activities are out of balance. The important brain chemical, serotonin, has been found to be low in depressed people and because of that deficiency they are unable to deal with the stresses of daily living.

Is depression hereditary? There are some types of depression that seem to run in families indicating there can be a genetic cause to the disease. However it can occur in people with absolutely no history of depression in their family.

There is also a link between depression and other physical changes in our body. Medical illnesses like stroke, heart attack, cancer and Parkinson's disease can be accompanied by symptoms of depression. Also, a severely stressful situation in life, like the loss of a loved one, financial difficulties or a divorce with all its accompanied stress, can also cause depression.

### DIAGNOSIS OF DEPRESSION

If you or someone close to you shows some of the signs of depression, the first step is to get a thorough physical examination from your doctor. The doctor can review all the medications currently being taken, do lab tests and check on more physical causes of the problem before submitting the patient to a psychological exam. Referral to a psychiatrist is often done before medication has begun.

*Continued on other side...*

