Depression after Brain Injury

Grief and feelings of loss are common after many illnesses. Dealing with life after a brain injury involves adjustment. As you or a loved one learns to deal with changes in your lives, you may have feelings of sadness, anxiety, frustration or anger. When sadness changes into depression, it is important to seek help.

Depression is a common emotional reaction to brain injury. Sometimes, depression is caused by the physical damage that the injury causes to the brain. Those hospitalized with a brain injury are 8 times more likely to suffer from depression. Depression often appears in the first 3 months, but the risk can be there for a year or longer. It is common for depression to occur during the later stages of recovery when there is a decrease in confusion and the person becomes more self-aware. Depression can hamper recovery and rehabilitation. Talk to your doctor if you are feeling depressed or sad.

**Signs of Depression**

When a person is depressed, he or she has several signs nearly every day that last at least 2 weeks.

Use this list to check (√) off any signs you or a loved one has had for 2 weeks or more:

- Loss of interest and pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling sad, blue, empty or down in the dumps
- Crying more than usual
- Feeling slowed down or restless and unable to sit still

More on next page ➔
Feeling worthless or guilty
Feeling pessimistic or hopeless
Feeling anxious or worried
Changes in appetite or weight loss or gain
Change in sleep patterns – being unable to sleep or sleeping too much
Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering or making decisions
Withdrawing from people / events you normally enjoy
Loss of energy or feeling tired all of the time.
Sexual problems

If you have any of these symptoms for more than 2 weeks, or if you have had thoughts of suicide or of trying to harm yourself or others, see your doctor.

What can be done to prevent depression?

- Learn about brain injury. Information can help lessen your fears. Talk to your health care professionals about your questions and concerns.
- Make the most of rehabilitation and keep track of your progress. The more you recover, the better you will feel.
- Spend time with family and friends. Talk about your feelings.
- Maintain interests and hobbies.
- Exercise.
- Talk to a health care professional as soon as you notice signs of depression.

Where can I get help in dealing with depression?

- When you are in the hospital or rehabilitation, talk with a psychologist, social worker, doctor, nurse or therapist. They can provide or recommend help for you.
- After discharge, call your family doctor or social worker.
To make an appointment or get a referral, call OSU Rehabilitation Psychology at (614) 293-3830. They can give you information about available mental health services.

In an emergency, call 911 or go to or call the OSU Emergency Department at (614) 293-8333.

Treatment for depression includes counseling, medicines or both. If you start medicines for depression, do not stop taking them without talking to your doctor.

Other Resources

- **Brain Injury Association of America**
  - 1-800-444-6443
  - www.biausa.org
  - Information, education and support for TBI patients and their families.

- **Brain Injury Association of Ohio**
  - 1-866-644-6242 or 614-481-7100
  - www.biaoh.org
  - Information, education and support for TBI patients and their families.
  - A Columbus area support group meets every 4th Wednesday at the Grandview Heights Library. Call 481-7100 for more information. To find a support group in your area, call 1-866-644-6242 or go to the website.

- **BrainLine.org**
  - 1-703-998-2020
  - www.brainline.org
  - Information about depression after traumatic brain injury, webcasts and online videos, and a question and answer section.

- **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance**
  - 1-800-826-3632
  - www.dbsalliance.org
Information about kinds of depression, treatment, local resources, and online support and discussion boards.

- **HandsOn Central Ohio** (formerly First Link)
  - To get help or give help, call 211, 24 hours a day.
  - For administrative help, call (614) 221-6766, Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, or email at info@handsoncentralohio.org.
  - More information can be found at their web site at www.handsongentralohi.org/public/.
  - Staff makes referrals to human services in Central Ohio.

- **Mental Health America**
  - 1-800-969-6642
  - www.mentalhealthamerica.net
  - Information about the causes and treatment of clinical depression and how to find local resources in your area.

- **National Institute of Mental Health**
  - 1-866-615-6464, 1-866-415-8051 (TTY)
  - www.nimh.nih.gov
  - Information and free booklets on depression and treatment and an interactive mental health services locator.

**24 Hour Services**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ..........1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Netcare Crisis Hotline ...........................................(614) 276-2273
North Central Mental Health Services,
    Suicide Prevention 24-hour Hotline .............(614) 221-5445

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.