



Signs and Symptoms of Depression in Individuals with Autism

General

Depression is a serious mental health disorder that consists of long periods of low mood, a loss of interest or pleasure in activities, and physical changes that get in the way of everyday tasks. Depression is more than a bad day. This resource provides information about depression in individuals with autism.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

Mood changes. These feelings might include feelings like sadness, hopelessness, or irritability that last for two weeks or more. It may be difficult to notice changes in mood in individuals with autism since they sometimes have trouble identifying and talking about emotions.

Physical changes. People with depression might have a loss of energy, changes in sleep, changes in appetite, or changes in their weight. Some people might have an increase in compulsive behaviors or stereotypic behaviors when they are depressed.

Changes in activity. Motivation to participate in activities goes down when people have depression. They may miss work or school, spend less time on hobbies, isolate themselves from family or friends, or not take care of their personal hygiene. For individuals with autism, there may be an increase in self-injurious behaviors.

Changes in thoughts. Depression can change the way people think about the world, themselves, and the future. A person with depression may be more negative and easily frustrated than usual. They may think about negative events and emotions over and over again.



WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

There are several risk factors that might increase the chances of depression. These things include genetics, stressful life events, medications, medical problems, or a history of depression.

WHAT'S NEXT?

There are a few ways to treat and manage depression. Therapists can help recognize the signs of depression and teach people coping strategies. Doctors may prescribe medications when depression is impacting an individual's everyday life.



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