Depression & Heart Disease

Depression not only affects your brain and behavior, it affects your entire body. Depression has been linked with other health problems including heart disease.

What is depression?
Major depressive disorder, or depression, is a serious mental illness. Depression interferes with your daily life and routine and reduces your quality of life. About 6.7 percent of U.S. adults ages 18 and older have depression.

Signs and Symptoms of Depression
- Ongoing sad, anxious, or empty feelings
- Feeling hopeless, guilty, worthless, helpless, irritable and/or restless
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once enjoyable, including sex
- Feeling tired all the time
- Difficulty concentratig, remembering details, or making decisions
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, or sleeping all the time
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Thoughts of death and suicide or suicide attempts
- Ongoing aches and pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not ease with treatment.

How are depression and heart disease linked?
People with heart disease are more likely to suffer from depression than otherwise healthy people. Angina and heart attacks are closely linked with depression. Researchers are unsure exactly why this occurs. They do know that some symptoms of depression may reduce your overall physical and mental health, increasing your risk for heart disease or making symptoms of heart disease worse. Fatigue or feelings of worthlessness may cause you to ignore your medication plan and avoid treatment for heart disease. Having depression increases your risk of death after a heart attack.

What Can We Do?
- Take care of our physical health
  → Eat healthy foods
  → Exercise
  → Drink less alcohol, or none at all
  → Quit smoking
- Seek the help of a mental health professional if you suspect you might be suffering from depression. Treatment works, recovery is possible
- If a friend or loved one suffers from depression, encourage them to seek treatment for the depression and encourage them to live a heart healthy lifestyle, and even see a doctor about their coronary risk factors.
- If a friend or a loved one already has heart disease, encourage them to find out if they are suffering from depression and seek treatment if they are.

For more information about heart disease and depression click on the links below

American Heart Association
National Institute of Mental Health

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