

October is National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month.

Depression is a disease that affects every aspect of a person's life, not just mood. People who are depressed are far more likely to have other chronic medical conditions, including cardiovascular disease, back problems, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and possibly worse outcomes. Depression is not just debilitating; it can be deadly.

An estimated one out of five people with depression will attempt suicide at some point.

A wide variety of treatments have been proven effective in treating depression, including talk therapy and procedures like neuromodulation, such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), vagus-nerve stimulation (VNS), transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), ketamine infusion, and deep-brain stimulation (DBS), all of which are offered at Keck Medicine of USC.

Who should get screened for depression?

Anyone who has:

- A two-week period of sadness, hopelessness, tearfulness, or is socially withdrawn
- Changes in sleep and appetite
- Thoughts of "life is not worth living or better off dead" or thoughts of hurting themselves
- Decreased energy and loss of interest and pleasure in activities they used to enjoy

Are there self-help tips for managing depression?

- Aerobic type exercise at least 4 times a week for 40 minutes for period of 6 months. Research studies have shown this to be equivalent to taking an antidepressant.
- Meditation at least 30 minutes twice daily



“ Don't feel embarrassed to let your primary care provider know during a medical examination that you have been feeling sad and depressed. If you see a friend or family member suddenly appear disengaged, withdrawn, sad, and depressed help them find a clinic, doctor, or therapist where they can obtain evaluation and treatment.

Carlos Figueroa, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and the Behavioral Sciences, Medical Director of Keck Psychiatric Services

“ The choice of treatment should be guided by the nature and severity of depression, past responses to treatment, and the patient's and family's beliefs and preferences.

Ashraf Elmashat, MD, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and the Behavioral Sciences, Associate Medical Director of Keck Outpatient Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Services

