

October is National Depression Month

Depression is a very real and serious medical illness which influences people's attitudes towards themselves, others, and life in general. It takes away their feelings of well-being and changes the way a person thinks and behaves. Depression is a common illness which anyone regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status can suffer. In fact, there are more than 19 million Americans who suffer from clinical depression each year.

There are several signs and symptoms that can determine if a person has depression. These include:

- Irritable mood most of the day, nearly every day
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities most of the day, nearly every day
- A sudden change in weight or appetite
- Inability to sleep or sleeping too much
- Agitation or restlessness (observed by others)
- Constant fatigue or loss of energy
- Frequent feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Frequent thoughts of death or suicide

Much like diabetes, asthma or heart disease, depression is a disease that requires medical attention and treatment. However, if left untreated, depression can last months or in some cases, years.

Many times depression can be caused by an imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain. Other things that may cause a person to be depressed are life experiences such as divorce, death of loved one, loss of a job, serious financial problems, certain medications and diseases, and family history of depression. Although the cause of a person's depression is not always known, more than 80% of people improve with proper treatment.

It is very important to take medication as directed by your doctor and to keep follow-up appointments. In addition, there are things you can do on your own to continue feeling better including exercising, improving your diet, establishing a normal, full-night sleeping schedule and reducing or eliminating caffeine and alcohol.

For more information contact the Crockett Resource Center for Independent Living, 1020 Loop 304 East in Crockett, Texas 936-544-2811.

October is National Protect Your Hearing Month

Hearing loss is a growing health issue among young adults and older Americans and is the third most common health problem in the United States. Today, there are more than 36 million American adults who have some degree of hearing loss. These are shocking statistics and even more so knowing that over half of those 36 million Americans are younger than 65. Hearing loss is an increasing health concern in this nation that is often preventable. Taking time to see an audiologist for regular hearing screenings and knowing the signs of hearing loss can protect hearing.

Signs that you may have a hearing loss include:

- Difficulty hearing people talk in noisy environments
- People seem to “mumble” all the time
- Family, friends or colleagues must often repeat themselves
- Trouble hearing people when they are not facing you or are in another room
- Trouble following conversations
- Ringing, buzzing, or hissing sounds in your ears

Causes of hearing loss:

- Exposure to excessive loud noise
- Ear infections, trauma, or ear disease
- Harm of the inner ear and ear drum from contact with a foreign object
- Illness or certain medications
- Deteriorating hearing due to the normal aging process

How to protect hearing:

- Wear hearing protection when around sounds are loud for a prolonged time
- Wear some type of hearing protection such as foam earplugs, earmuffs, and custom hearing protection devices
- Contact local audiologists for custom hearing protection devices
- Turn down the volume when listening to the radio, the TV, MP3 player or anything through ear buds and head phones
- Walk away from noise
- Do not put anything in your ear other than hearing protection

For more information contact Crockett Resource Center for Independent Living at 936-544-2811.

The ADA and Hearing Loss

Hearing loss affects many Americans.

- One out of ten people in the United States has a hearing loss
- At age 65, one out of three people has a hearing loss
- Hearing loss ranks with arthritis, high blood pressure, and heart disease as one of the most common physical conditions
- There are 43 million Americans with disabilities – of those, 28 million have hearing loss
- It is estimated that 30 school children per 1,000 have hearing loss

Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act addresses telephone and television access for people with hearing impairments. It requires common carriers (telephone companies) to establish interstate and intrastate telecommunication relay services (TRS) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TRS enables callers with hearing and speech impairments who use text telephones (TTY's and TDD's) and callers who use voice telephones to communicate with each other through a third-party communications assistant. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has set minimum standards for TRS services. Title IV also requires closed captioning of federally funded public service announcements.

For more information, contact the Crockett Resource Center for Independent Living at 903-729-7505.

Protecting Against Floods

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters. If you live in an area where floods occur, here are things you can do to protect yourself:

- Plan for evacuation including where you are going to go and the route you will follow.
- Prepare your home for a flood. Call your local building department or office of emergency management for information.
- Purchase flood insurance.
- Keep all insurance policies and a list of valuable items in a safe place.
- Take photos or a videotape of the valuables you keep in your home.
- Listen to your radio or television for reports of flood danger.
- Keep your car filled with gas.

If a flood does occur, here are some things to remember:

- **Do not** try to walk or drive through flooded areas. Water can be deeper than it appears and water levels rise quickly. Follow official emergency evacuation routes. If your car stalls in floodwater, get out quickly and move to higher ground.
- Stay away from moving water; moving water six inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Cars are easily swept away in just two feet of water.
- Stay away from disaster areas unless authorities ask for volunteers.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- If your home is flooded, turn the utilities off until emergency officials tell you it is safe to turn them on. Do not pump the basement out until floodwater recedes. Avoid weakened floors, walls, and rooftops.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with floodwaters.

After a flood:

- Wear gloves and boots when cleaning up.
- Open all doors and windows. Use fans if possible to air out the building.
- Wash all clothes and linens in hot water.
- Discard mattresses and stuffed furniture. They cannot be adequately cleaned.
- Wash dirt and mud from walls, counters, and hard surfaced floors with soap and water. Disinfect by wiping surfaces with a solution of one cup bleach per gallon of water.
- Discard all food that has come into contact with floodwater. Canned food is fine, however, thoroughly wash the can before opening.

- If your well is flooded, your tap water is probably unsafe. If you have public water, the health department will let you know, through radio and television, if your water is not safe to drink. Until your water is safe, use clean bottled water.
- Learn how to purify water. If you have a well, learn how to decontaminate it.
- Do not use your septic system when water is standing on the ground around it. The ground below will not absorb water from sinks or toilets. When the soil has dried, it is probably safe to again use your septic system. To be sure, contact your local health department.
- When floodwaters have receded, watch out for weakened road surfaces.

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