

## Minnesota Department of Health

# Depression and Family Health History

### Screening for Individuals Without a Family History

- ◆ Individuals with any of the following symptoms: persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood, feelings of hopelessness, guilt, or worthlessness, loss of interest in activities that once brought pleasure, decreased energy, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, insomnia or oversleeping, weight loss or weight gain, irritability, thoughts of suicide, or persistent physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment such as headaches, digestive disorders, or physical pain should be screened by a physician.<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Adults should be screened in clinical practices that have systems in place to assure accurate diagnoses, effective treatments, and follow-up.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Mental Health and the American Psychiatric Association

<sup>2</sup> United States Preventive Services Task Force

### Screening For Individuals With A Family History

- ◆ Be aware that depression and other mood disorders run in families.
- ◆ Family history is included in the National Institute of Mental Health's, the American Psychiatric Association's, and the National Mental Health Association's risk factors for depression. There are no specific screening guidelines for individuals with a family history of depression, beyond the screening guidelines mentioned above.

### What is a Family Health History?

A record of a person's current and past illnesses, and those of his or her parents, brothers, sisters, children, and other blood relatives. A family health history shows the pattern of certain diseases in a family, and helps to determine risk factors for those and other diseases.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> National Cancer Institute

# Depression Risk Factors and What You Can Do About Them

## Things You Can Change

**Diet:** A diet high in fat and calories and low in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits can increase risk.

**Exercise:** An inactive lifestyle increases risk.

**Stress:** Increases risk

**Substance abuse:** Increases risk

**Environmental factors:** Living with violence, neglect, abuse, or poverty increases risk.

## Things You Can't Change

**Family History:** Children or siblings of individuals with major depression are more likely to develop it themselves.

**Age:** Risk increases with age.

**Sex:** Women experience depression about twice as often as men.<sup>4</sup>

**Accompanying diseases such as stroke, heart attack, Parkinson's disease, and hormonal disorders:** Increases risk

**Menstrual cycle changes:** Pregnancy, post-partum period, miscarriage, pre-menopause, and menopausal periods can increase risk.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm#sup1>

## What Can You Do?

- ◆ Eat a balanced diet including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats
- ◆ Get active
- ◆ Drink less alcohol and don't use illegal drugs
- ◆ Regular screening
- ◆ Talk to your healthcare provider



## What Can You Do If You Have a Family History?

- ◆ Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history of depression
- ◆ Regular screening and risk assessment by a healthcare provider
- ◆ Engage in healthy behaviors (see left box)



## Your Family Health History...

Know your past.  
Act in the present.  
Protect your future.