



Employee Benefits Newsletter

APRIL 2009

April is Addiction and Depression Awareness Month

Addiction

Addiction is an obsession, compulsion or excessive physical or psychological dependence, such as drug addiction, video game addiction, crime, alcoholism, compulsive overeating, problem gambling, etc. The addiction causes the person to engage in specific activity which may be harmful to one's health, mental state or social life. People become addicted because of a combination of factors, genetic and/or environmental. People with close relatives who have addictions are at higher risk to become addicts. However, many people with a vulnerability to addiction do not become addicted others with no risk factors do become addicted. A person's environment, school or work, can influence if a person becomes an addict or not. When people have mental health problems any type of addiction can worsen the problem. Research shows that more than half of people with an addiction also have mental health problems, especially anxiety or depression. An addiction stimulates the brain in ways that it feels good and makes people want to repeat the action. People also become addicted in order to help relive stress, boredom or sadness or reduce their inhibitions and make it easier to talk or interactive with others and speak up their feelings.



Depression

Depression can occur at any age, and is a serious medical condition that affects our thoughts, feelings and ability to function in everyday life. Aside from normal feelings of sadness, loss or passing mood states, clinical depression is persistent and interferes with a person's ability to function. A link in genetic predisposition and life history seem to determine a person's level of depression risk, and may be triggered by stress, difficult life events, adverse effects of medications and environmental factors.

There are three main types of depression:

1. Major Depression - this is a combination of symptoms that interfere with the ability to work, study, sleep and eat. This type may occur only once but more commonly occur several times in a lifetime.
2. Dysthymia - this type is less severe and involves chronic symptoms that do not disable the person but may hinder them from functioning well or from feeling good.
3. Bipolar Disorder - this type is characterized by cycling mood changes; severe highs (mania) and lows (depression) and is less prevalent than other types of depression.

Out of 18.8 million adults, 9.5% will have a depressive illness, and approximately 4% of adolescents will become seriously depressed each year.

Depression is one of the most common conditions associated with suicide.

