

About Depression

Preventive Health Issue 3: Recovery and Treatment



COMMUNITY CARE PREVENTIVE HEALTH LINE • 1-866-639-2943 • TTY/TDD 1-877-877-3580

As you continue in treatment, your symptoms of depression should start to go away. Your mood will get better. You will have more energy. It will be easier to live a normal life again.

Because you feel better, you might think your depression is cured when, in fact, it may not be. Stay in treatment and keep taking your medicine. If you don't, the symptoms of depression might come back. This is called a relapse. Relapses are discouraging because the symptoms that you worked hard to get rid of return. Many times treatment must start all over again.



About half the people with depression have it only once. For the rest, the symptoms of depression usually go away for awhile and then come back. People who have had depression more than once might need treatment and medicine for a longer time.

When will I recover?

Recovery happens in stages. When your symptoms start to get better you might feel like your previous self and think your depression is gone. When this happens, it is important to continue your medicine and therapy. If you don't, the symptoms can return. You can have a relapse.

How long will I take medicine?

Ask your doctor. People being treated for depression usually take medicine for many months. Some stay on medicine for 6 months or more. Take your medicine for as long as your doctor tells you to help avoid a relapse. If you and your doctor decide that it's time for you to stop taking medicine, you should stop slowly over a few weeks. Stopping all at once can cause side effects. When you are stopping your medicine, tell your doctor if any of the symptoms of depression come back. Your doctor can start the medicine again before you have a full relapse.

How long should I go to therapy?

You and your therapist should talk about when to stop talk-therapy. Decide together how you've gotten better and what needs more work. You and your therapist should both agree that you no longer need therapy before you stop. As a first step in stopping therapy, your therapist might tell you that you need fewer sessions. Try to use what you have learned in therapy even if you are not going as often. If you need it, your therapist can start treatment with you again.

Managing your medicine...

Is important to successfully recover from depression. Take your medicine as the doctor tells you even when you start to feel better. A pillbox can remind you which medicine to take each day.

What about my antidepressants?

Talk with your doctor. Your doctor can answer your questions about medicine for depression. Tell your doctor how you feel and if you are having any side effects. Writing things down can help you remember to tell your doctor. Do not take any new medicine without talking to your doctor. Do not take any over-the-counter medicine, herbs, or vitamins without first talking to your doctor or the pharmacist at the drug store.

Keep all appointments with your doctor—even if you feel better.

Make sure that you don't run out of medicine. Plan your prescription refills.

Do not drink alcohol or use street drugs while taking antidepressants. Be sure to tell your doctor if you feel like using alcohol or street drugs while taking antidepressants. Also alert your doctor if you do use alcohol or street drugs.

What if I don't feel better?

Feeling better takes time. Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. People rarely “snap out of” a depression, but they can feel a little better day-by-day. Don't get discouraged even if you do not see any changes after a few months of treatment. Talk with your doctor or therapist about how you feel and about the changes you want to see. Your doctor or therapist will help find a treatment that works for you.

If you aren't happy with your therapy, talk with your therapist. There are different ways to treat depression. Most therapists know how to work in different ways. Together you can find a way that works.

What else can I do to take care of myself?

As you begin to feel better, think about what could have led to your depression. Think about what you can change in your life to avoid becoming depressed. Reducing the stress in your life and demands on your time can help.

Some drugs, although safe when taken alone, can, if taken with others, cause severe and dangerous side effects. Be sure to tell all your health professionals—including your dentist and other medical specialists—about the medications you are taking.

Help Us Help Others

We'd like to know if these newsletters are helpful for people with depression. We've included a one-page survey with this issue. Please take a few minutes to answer the questions and return it to us in the postage-paid envelope. You do not have to include your name. Your comments will help us make these newsletters more helpful.



If unsure where to go for help, call Community Care. In times of crisis, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

What can I do to help myself feel better?

- **Keep a daily schedule.**
- **Set realistic goals.** Break large tasks into small ones and do what you can as you can. Reward yourself for each goal you reach.
- **Think positive thoughts.** If you have negative thoughts about yourself, you can try to change them. Don't blame yourself. Don't expect to fail. Try to think good things about yourself.
- **Fight your negative thoughts.** If you find yourself thinking something negative, try to look at it another way. Depression often makes you think the worst. Step back from the problem or write the problem down. You may see that your negative thoughts often do not make sense.
- **Notice good things about yourself.** Seeing good things helps you put your negative thoughts in perspective.
- **Keep a list of good things,** such as nice things that people say to you, and carry the list with you. This will help you remember that there are many things you do well.
- **Ask for help with big decisions when you feel depressed.** Depression changes how you think about yourself and feel about situations. You might not make clear decisions when you are depressed. If you have to make a big decision, ask someone you trust to help you, such as a therapist, a family member, a friend, or your doctor.
- **Ask for help when you need it.** You might think that no one wants to hear about your problems, but there are people who want to help you and who know what you're feeling. Don't be afraid to ask for help and don't think that you are a burden.
- **Don't criticize yourself when things go wrong.** Everything doesn't always go as you hope. Making positive changes in your life takes time and sometimes only happens by trial and error. Be patient. Be sure to notice improvements.



- **Think about taking stress management or assertiveness classes.** These classes teach ways to deal with stress and how to express yourself when you have a problem.
- **Think about joining a self-help group.** Join a group for people who have had depression. It will help to talk to people who have had the same problems as you.
- **Get help for problems that make treatment harder.** Talk to your doctor or therapist about your alcohol or drug use. Using alcohol or drugs can make depression worse. Getting treatment for alcohol or drug abuse, if you have this problem, is important for long-term success in treating depression.
- **Participate in activities that make you feel better.** Mild exercise, going to a movie or a ballgame, or participating in other activities may help.
- **Try to be with other people and confide in someone;** it's usually better than being alone.
- **Remember** there are medications and therapies that ease the pain of depression. Depression is a treatable illness.

Questions?

Call the toll-free Preventive Health Line:
1-866-639-2943;
TTY/TDD:
1-877-877-3580.

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