

Depression Treatment: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Depression is a condition that affects the way you feel, think, and act. It causes symptoms such as low energy, loss of interest in daily activities, and sadness or grouching that goes on for a long time. Depression is very common and affects men and women of all ages.

Depression is a medical illness caused by changes in the natural chemicals in your brain. It is not a character flaw, and it does not mean that you are a bad or weak person. It does not mean that you are going crazy.

It is important to know that depression can be treated. Medicines, counseling, and self-care can all help. Many people do not get help because they are embarrassed or think that they will get over the depression on their own. But some people do not get better without treatment.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Learn about antidepressant medicines

Antidepressant medicines can improve or end the symptoms of depression. You may need to take the medicine for at least 6 months, and often longer. Keep taking your medicine even if you feel better. If you stop taking it too soon, your symptoms may come back or get worse.

You may start to feel better within 1 to 3 weeks of taking antidepressant medicine. But it can take as many as 6 to 8 weeks to see more improvement. Talk to your doctor if you have problems with your medicine or if you do not notice any improvement after 3 weeks.

Antidepressants can make you feel tired, dizzy, or nervous. Some people have dry mouth, constipation,

headaches, sexual problems, an upset stomach, or diarrhea. Many of these side effects are mild and go away on their own after you take the medicine for a few weeks. Some may last longer. Talk to your doctor if side effects bother you too much. You might be able to try a different medicine. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, talk to your doctor about what medicines you can take.

Learn about counseling

In many cases, counseling can work as well as medicines to treat mild to moderate depression. Counseling is done by licensed mental health providers, such as psychologists, social workers, and some types of nurses. It can be done in one-on-one sessions or in a group setting. Many people find group sessions helpful.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a type of counseling. In this treatment therapy, you learn how to see and change unhelpful thinking styles that may be adding to your depression. Counseling and medicines often work well when used together.

To manage depression

- Be physically active. Getting 30 minutes of exercise each day is good for your body and your mind. Begin slowly if it is hard for you to get started. If you already exercise, keep it up.
- Plan something pleasant for yourself every day. Include activities that you have enjoyed in the past.
- Get enough sleep. Talk to your doctor if you have problems sleeping.
- Eat a balanced diet. If you do not feel hungry, eat small snacks rather than large meals.
- Do not drink alcohol, use illegal drugs, or take medicines that your doctor has not prescribed for you. They may interfere with your treatment.
- Spend time with family and friends. It may help to speak openly about your depression with people you trust.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Do not make major life decisions while you are depressed. Depression may change the way you think. You will be able to make better decisions after you feel better.
- Think positively. Challenge negative thoughts with statements such as "I am hopeful"; "Things will get better"; and "I can ask for the help I need." Write down these statements and read them often, even if you don't believe them yet.
- Be patient with yourself. It took time for your depression to develop, and it will take time for your symptoms to improve. Do not take on too much or be too hard on yourself.
- Learn all you can about depression from written and online materials.
- Check out behavioral health classes to learn more about dealing with depression.
- Keep the numbers for these national suicide hotlines: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) and 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433). If you or someone you know talks about suicide or feeling hopeless, get help right away.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You feel you cannot stop from hurting yourself or someone else.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You hear voices.

- You feel much more depressed.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You are having problems with your depression medicine.
- You are not getting better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **G693** in the search box to learn more about "**Depression Treatment: Care Instructions**".

©2006-2019 Healthwise, Incorporated.

This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.