

# DEPRESSION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

We all feel sad from time to time. Sometimes a deep sadness can be a medical illness called depression. Depression makes it hard to do daily activities, such as getting out of bed, going to work, or taking care of yourself and/or your family. While you may feel helpless and hopeless, depression symptoms can be treated.

## Causes

Depression can be caused by many things, including a family history of depression, significant loss like the loss of a loved one or job, life stress, or an illness. It is not a character flaw or weakness. Depression can affect anyone at any age. Depression is a common health problem - you are not alone.

## Symptoms of depression

- ◆ Sad or anxious feelings
- ◆ Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies or activities you used to enjoy
- ◆ Trouble concentrating or remembering
- ◆ Changes in sleep habits, eating habits, or weight
- ◆ Pain or headaches that go on
- ◆ Feelings of being worthless, guilty, hopeless or helpless
- ◆ Thoughts of death or suicide

## Treatment

- ◆ Lifestyle changes like increased exercise, eating a better diet, getting the sleep you need regularly
- ◆ Talk therapy
- ◆ Medicine

Initially your doctor may prescribe a medicine to try to help to improve your mood. A combination of medicine, talk therapy and lifestyle changes can reduce your symptoms of depression.

Medications can take up to six to eight weeks before they are fully working, so be patient. Even if you feel that your medicine is not working, do not stop taking it without talking to your doctor first.

# MEDICATIONS USED TO TREAT DEPRESSION

Many medicines are used to treat depression. You may need to try more than one medicine before you find the right one for your needs.

## When you use medication for depression:

- ◆ Find ways to help you remember to take your medication (a pill minder or an alarm on your phone)
- ◆ Take your medicine exactly as directed by your doctor
- ◆ Take your medicine on a regular schedule
- ◆ Keep taking your medicine even if you are feeling well. Stopping too quickly can lead to uncomfortable and even dangerous side effects. Talk to your doctor if you think you are ready to stop taking your medicine.

While these medicines help to improve your mood, all can cause side effects. If you have side effects that you think might be caused by your medicine, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

## Class of medicines

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### Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)

Examples: fluoxetine, citalopram, paroxetine, sertraline

Common side effects:

- Restlessness, nervousness
- Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue, drowsiness
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Change in sexual function

### Serotonin and Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)

Examples: CYMBALTA®, PRISTIQ®, venlafaxine

Common side effects:

- Restlessness, nervousness
- Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue, drowsiness
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Headache
- Increased sweating
- Dizziness
- Change in sexual function

### Tricyclic Antidepressants (TCAs)

Examples: amitriptyline, doxepin, nortriptyline

Common side effects:

- Low blood pressure
- Rapid heartbeat
- Dry mouth
- Blurred vision
- Constipation
- Urinary retention
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Weight gain

### Other medicines

Examples: bupropion, mirtazapine

Common side effects:

- Headache
- Tremors
- Drowsiness
- Dry mouth
- Weight gain
- Trouble sleeping
- Nausea
- Change in appetite
- Seizures (bupropion)

# TREATING DEPRESSION

## Setting goals

Your daily choices have the biggest impact on managing your depression.

The most important things you can do for your health are:

- ◆ Take your medicines as directed by your doctor
- ◆ Work with your doctor to help you set your goals

Start each day with setting one small goal to accomplish.

- ◆ What's important to you?
- ◆ What are your hopes and dreams?
- ◆ What would you like to do more of?
- ◆ What does being happy mean to you?
- ◆ What is an area of life you would like to improve?
- ◆ Check with your provider to make sure your goals seem realistic for your situation your situation

**Choose one or more goals you can work on now.**

**Don't overload yourself - keep your expectations manageable.**

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### Goal 1: Lifestyle choices

- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy diet
- Get enough sleep
- Limit use of alcohol and other substances (These can worsen feelings of depression)
- Stick to a daily schedule with regular work, social and sleep times

### Goal 2: Therapy and doctor appointments

- Keep my appointments, even if I feel fine

### Goal 3: Medicines

- Take medicine as directed by my doctor (Don't stop taking medicine without talking to my doctor first)
- Be patient; response to medicine is often gradual and improvement can be slow
- Talk to my doctor about my concerns or side effects from my medicine
- Don't blame myself for having depression or responding slowly to my medicine

- Refill my prescription medicine before I run out. If you have no alternate transportation, RideConnect offers rides to and from the pharmacy. Call South Country Member Services at 1-866-567-7242. All rides will require a 72-hour (3-day) notice.

### Goal 4: Support and education

- Consider talk therapy
- Remain social with my family, friends, attend a support group or stay involved in activities that I enjoy doing (even though it may be hard to do right now)
- Talk to my doctor about depression self-help and education programs

**Goal 5: Other Goals** (use a blank paper to add more as needed)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# ACTION PLAN

1. Keep in close contact with the doctor prescribing your medicine. It is very important to talk to your doctor about any medicine concerns or questions you may have.
2. If you feel your depression is getting worse, call your doctor right away. Symptoms of worsening depression may include:
  - ◆ Worsening of sleep problems
  - ◆ Avoiding social situations and losing touch with friends
  - ◆ Increased fatigue where daily tasks seem more difficult and take more time to complete
  - ◆ You're unable to perform self care activities like bathing, combing your hair or brushing your teeth
  - ◆ You are not able to think clearly
  - ◆ You have thoughts of despair, death, or ending your life

## Write your provider's name and information here

Doctor name and phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Mental Health Provider name and phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## References and other resources

### National Mental Health Association

800-969-6642

[www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

### National Alliance of Mental Illness

800-950-6264

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-8255

### Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline

833-600-2670

### Crisis Text Line

Text MN to 741741

*The general information in this document is not intended to replace anything your doctor has told you about depression. If you have any concerns or questions about the specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider.*