

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Am I Depressed? What Will Help?

Did you know? With treatment, most people with depression get much better. Yet most people with depression do not ask their doctor for help.¹ Depression is one of the leading causes of [disability](#) in the United States.²

What Is Depression?

Depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in your brain. It is a serious medical illness. It involves your body, your mood, and your thoughts. It affects how you eat, sleep, work, and live. It affects how you think about yourself and other things.

There are many reasons a person can become depressed. These include:

- Family history
- Certain diseases and medicines
- Hormone changes
- Life events, such as death of a loved one

What Are Symptoms of Depression?

Many people with depression don't know they have it. So it is important for you to understand the signs and symptoms. If you have been having these symptoms nearly every day for at least two weeks, you may have depression:

- Feeling sad or "low"
- Feeling hopeless
- Loss of interest in daily activities, such as hobbies, work, sex, or being with friends
- Feeling helpless or worthless. Feeling like you don't matter
- Feeling restless or anxious
- Having no energy. Feeling tired all the time
- Trouble concentrating. Trouble making decisions
- Losing weight without dieting, or gaining weight
- Sleeping too much, or having trouble sleeping
- Having thoughts of dying or suicide

Depression Can Be Treated

You can't just "snap out" of depression. You have to get help to treat it. The first step is to decide to get treatment. See your doctor and talk about your symptoms.

Disability

A physical or mental condition that keeps someone from working or living a normal life.



Am I Depressed? What Will Help?

Depression is a serious medical illness. Visit your doctor if you think you may have depression. It can be treated. You can feel better.

Take your antidepressant exactly as your doctor tells you to. Do not stop taking it without talking to your doctor first. If you stop suddenly, you may have bad side effects.

How Is Depression Treated?

Your doctor will do a complete check-up to rule out other illnesses or causes for your symptoms. The most common treatments for depression are:

- **Medicine.** Antidepressant drugs are used to treat depression. There are many kinds of antidepressants.
- **“Talk” therapy.** This may be counseling or a support group.

Antidepressant medicines can help many people with depression. Here are the important questions to ask:

- What is the name of the medicine you are prescribing for me?
- When will it start to work? *It may take 4 or more weeks for your antidepressant to work.*
- How much should I take? When should I take it?
- Should I avoid any activities, foods, or drinks while I am taking this medicine?
- What side effects might I have and what can I do about them?

“Talk” therapy can also help many people with depression. A psychologist, a social worker, a counselor, or a minister may offer talk therapy. It may help you:

- Learn better ways to cope with your problems
- Learn how to think and act in positive ways
- Improve personal relationships
- Feel more in control of your life

People who are depressed often do best when they take medicine and do talk therapy.

References

1. National Institute of Mental Health. “Depression.” Available at: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm>. Accessed June 14, 2007.
2. National Institute of Mental Health. “Depression. A Treatable Illness.” Available at: <http://menanddepression.nimh.nih.gov/infopage7429.html>. Accessed June 14, 2007.