

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Ask Your Doctor About Depression

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

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. You can't just "snap out" of depression. You have to get help to treat it.

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 for at least two weeks, you may have depression:

- Sadness
- Hopelessness
- Loss of interest in daily activities

You Can Talk to Your Doctor About Depression

Depression can be treated. Here are the things you need to do:

- Fill out the **Checklist for Talking to Your Doctor** on the back.
- See your doctor to talk about your symptoms.

Getting the Most Out of Your Doctor Visit

- Take a family member or caregiver with you. They can support you. They can describe how you have been acting. They can make sure your questions are answered.
- With your doctor, go over the **Checklist for Talking to Your Doctor**. (See back.)
- Speak up if you don't understand something. Don't be afraid. All your questions are important.
- Don't worry about taking too much of your doctor's time. Depression is a real illness. Your doctor wants to take time to understand your illness. Your doctor wants to make sure you get the right treatment.
- Work with your doctor to make a treatment plan that you will follow. Be honest. If you do not intend to do something your doctor suggests, say so. Ask about other options.



Ask Your Doctor About Depression

Checklist for Talking to Your Doctor

I feel _____.
(To complete the sentence, mark all the words that describe how you feel.)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad | <input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blue | <input type="checkbox"/> Helpless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tearful | <input type="checkbox"/> Down in the dumps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empty | <input type="checkbox"/> Tired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhausted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worthless | <input type="checkbox"/> Confused or mixed up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restless | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> Distracted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tense | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty about not being able to do things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irritable | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty about the way I feel |

I don't want to _____.
(To complete the sentence, mark all the things you don't want to do.)

- Do anything I used to enjoy doing
- Eat (Or I eat too much)
- Be with my family or friends
- Get out of bed in the morning
- Have sex
- Live my life any more

I have been having these feelings for _____ weeks or _____ months.

Depression can be treated.

You **can** feel better.

Making a Treatment Plan

After you describe your feelings, your doctor will do a complete check-up. Other illnesses besides depression can cause many of the same feelings.

If you have depression, be ready to talk about treatment options. The most common treatments are:

- Medicine
- "Talk" therapy such as counseling or a support group

Ask what you can expect from treatment. Explain what you would like from treatment. Tell your doctor what treatments you would like to try. Agree on a treatment plan, and then follow it. You also need to see your doctor regularly. Your doctor will want to make sure your treatment plan is working.

Reference

1. National Institute of Mental Health. "Depression." Available at: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm>. Accessed June 14, 2007.