

Depression: Tips to Help Yourself

As your healthcare providers help treat your depression, you can also help yourself. Keep in mind that your illness affects you emotionally, physically, mentally, and socially. So full recovery will take time. Take care of your body and your soul, and be patient with yourself as you get better.

Self-care

- **Educate yourself.** Read about treatment and medicine options. If you have the energy, attend local conferences or support groups. Keep a list of useful websites and helpful books and use them as needed. This illness is not your fault. Don't blame yourself for your depression.
- **Manage early symptoms.** If you notice symptoms returning, have triggers, or identify other factors that may lead to a depressive episode, get help as soon as possible. Ask trusted friends and family to monitor your behavior and let you know if they see anything of concern.
- **Work with your provider.** Find a provider you can trust. Communicate honestly with that person. Share information on your treatment for depression and your reaction to medicines. You may need to try different medicines before finding the right one.
- **Be prepared for a crisis.** Know what to do if you have a crisis. Keep the phone number of a crisis hotline handy. Know where your community's urgent care centers and the closest emergency department are.
- **Hold off on big decisions.** Depression can cloud your judgment. So wait until you feel better before making major life decisions. These include changing jobs, moving, making an expensive purchase, or getting married or divorced.
- **Be patient.** Recovering from depression is a process. Don't be discouraged if it takes some time to feel better.
- **Keep it simple.** Depression saps your energy and concentration. So you won't be able to do all the things you used to do. Set small goals and do what you can.
- **Be with others.** Don't isolate yourself—you'll only feel worse. Try to be with other people. And take part in fun activities when you can. Go to a movie, ballgame, religious service, or social event. Talk openly with people you can trust. And accept help when it's offered.

Take care of your body



People with depression often lose the desire to take care of themselves. That only makes their problems worse. During treatment and afterward, make a point to:

- **Exercise.** It's a great way to take care of your body. And studies have shown that exercise helps fight depression. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity a day. Walking in small blocks of time (5-10 minutes) is a good way to start, but anything that gets you moving (gardening, house cleaning) counts.
- **Not use drugs or alcohol.** These may ease the pain in the short term. But they'll only make your problems worse in the long run.
- **Get relief from stress.** Ask your healthcare provider for relaxation exercises and techniques to help ease stress. Consider activities like meditation, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, or tai chi.
- **Eat right.** A balanced and healthy diet helps keep your body healthy.
- **Get adequate sleep.** Aim for 8 hours per night. Too much or too little sleep can cause other physical and emotional problems.

StayWell last reviewed this educational content on 1/1/2022

© 2000-2022 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions.