

Recovering From Depression: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Taking good care of yourself is important as you recover from depression. In time, your symptoms will fade as your treatment takes hold. Do not give up. Instead, focus your energy on getting better.

Your mood will improve. It just takes some time. Focus on things that can help you feel better, such as being with friends and family, eating well, and getting enough rest. But take things slowly. Do not do too much too soon. You will begin to feel better gradually.

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?

Be realistic

- If you have a large task to do, break it up into smaller steps you can handle, and just do what you can.
- You may want to put off important decisions until your depression has lifted. If you have plans that will have a major impact on your life, such as marriage, divorce, or a job change, try to wait a bit. Talk it over with friends and loved ones who can help you look at the overall picture first.
- Reaching out to people for help is important. Do not isolate yourself. Let your family and friends help you. Find someone you can trust and confide in, and talk to that person.
- Be patient, and be kind to yourself. Remember that depression is not your fault and is not something you can overcome with willpower alone. Treatment is important for depression, just like for any other illness. Feeling better takes time, and your mood will improve little by little.

Stay active

- Stay busy and get outside. Take a walk, or try some other light exercise.
- Talk with your doctor about an exercise program. Exercise can help with mild depression.
- Go to a movie or concert. Take part in a church activity or other social gathering. Go to a ball game.
- Ask a friend to have dinner with you.

Take care of yourself

- Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein. If you have lost your appetite, eat small snacks rather than large meals.
- Avoid using illegal drugs or marijuana and drinking alcohol. Do not take medicines that have not been prescribed for you. They may interfere with medicines you may be taking for depression, or they may make your depression worse.
- Take your medicines exactly as they are prescribed. 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. If you have questions or concerns about your medicines, or if you do not notice any improvement by 3 weeks, talk to your doctor.
- Continue to take your medicine after your symptoms improve. Taking your medicine for at least 6 months after you feel better can help keep you from getting depressed again. If this isn't the first time you have been depressed, your doctor may recommend you to take medicine even longer.
- If you have any side effects from your medicine, tell your doctor. Many side effects are mild and will go away on their own after you have been taking the medicine for a few weeks. Some may last longer. Talk to your doctor if side effects are bothering you too much. You might be able to try a different medicine.
- Continue counseling. It may help prevent depression from returning, especially if you've had multiple episodes of depression. Talk with your counselor if you are having a hard time attending your sessions or you think the sessions aren't working. Don't just stop going.
- Get enough sleep. Talk to your doctor if you are having problems sleeping.
- Avoid sleeping pills unless they are prescribed by the doctor treating your depression. Sleeping pills may make you groggy during the day, and they may interact with other medicine you are taking.
- If you have any other illnesses, such as diabetes, heart disease, or high blood pressure, make sure to continue with your treatment. Tell your doctor about all of the medicines you take, including those with or without a prescription.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

When should you call for help?



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

- You feel like hurting yourself or someone else.
- Someone you know has depression and is about to attempt or is attempting suicide.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You hear voices.
- Someone you know has depression and:
 - Starts to give away possessions.
 - Uses illegal drugs or drinks alcohol heavily.
 - Talks or writes about death, including writing suicide notes or talking about guns, knives, or pills.
 - Starts to spend a lot of time alone.
 - Acts very aggressively or suddenly appears calm.

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

- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

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

Enter **N529** in the search box to learn more about **"Recovering From Depression: Care Instructions"**.