

What You Should Know About Your Treatment



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ValueOptions® Depression Series

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Luckily, there is much known on how to relieve depression. The sections below explain several treatment options and tips to make them work.

Methods that work together to relieve depression:

- Education on helpful health practices
- Therapy to help you learn to:
 - accomplish daily tasks
 - correct negative thinking
 - reduce stress of daily living
 - keep track of your response to prescribed medications
- Antidepressant medication for correction of biological causes and/or physical symptoms of depression

Seek professional treatment

Often, people need professional help to overcome depression even after trying the methods above. Your doctor or health plan may refer you to a mental health provider. Treatment with a psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker can help reduce the severity and length of your depression.

Some facts to help you understand therapy:

- Therapy consists of scheduled appointments to identify and resolve stressors that trigger depression.
- It is very common for special medications called “antidepressants” to be recommended.
- The most effective treatment of depression often includes both medication and therapy.
- You may have a psychiatrist prescribe and monitor medication, and a psychologist or social worker to conduct therapy and coordinate your treatment.

Get the most out of therapy

- **Attend all appointments**, even if you are feeling better.
- **Learn tools to manage stress.** There may be classes available in your community to help you learn in a group setting.
- **Report any problem** or concern that may complicate your situation. This is especially important if you use drugs or alcohol. Treatment of substance abuse is necessary for recovery from depression.
- **Ask your therapist about bringing family members to sessions.** When family members understand depression they are able to help you. This is as important for your loved ones as it is for you — they often feel confused and helpless about what they can do.

Medication for depression: The following are reasons to consider medication:*

- Depressed people have too few of some chemicals that send messages between nerve cells within the part of the brain that controls moods and feelings.
- Antidepressant medications help increase the level of key brain chemicals in the body.
- Stressful life events and changes in how your brain works seem to go together, although no one knows exactly why.



- You may not be able to get rid of life stressors well or soon enough to get relief from depression.
- Medication will reduce brain chemistry changes while you work on your stress.
- Medication may speed up your recovery.

Benefits of antidepressant treatment: When used safely and properly, antidepressant medications help:

- Improve mood
- Increase energy
- Increase interest in usual activities and sex
- Decrease restlessness
- Reduce thoughts of guilt or unworthiness
- Increase hope and happiness
- Eliminate thoughts of self harm or suicide
- Improve sleep
- Improve appetite

Choice of antidepressant medications: There are more than 24 antidepressant medications from which your doctor will choose. The following criteria will assist with the decision:

- Your symptoms
- Your other health issues and any current medications
- Medications that have helped you in the past
- Medications that have helped relatives in the past
- Impact of possible medication side effects on your lifestyle

How to use antidepressant medications: You may find this information useful:

- Once your doctor starts antidepressant medication with you, he or she will watch your reaction carefully.
- Specific medications or dosages can be changed according to your reports.
- Most side effects from medication disappear as your body adjusts within the first six weeks of treatment.

- Until you adjust, you may be able to relieve symptoms through change in sleep habits or simple remedies.
- *Be sure to ask your doctor what side effects to expect.* Some common side effects may include: dry mouth, increase/decrease in weight, constipation, or change in your sexual responsiveness.

Your role in treatment: Your doctor will need your help in making treatment with antidepressant medication successful. You need to pay attention to your reactions and report the following situations immediately:

- Side effects that are particularly bad or do not disappear after about six weeks
- Side effects that seem dangerous to your health
- Medical conditions that occur after start of antidepressant treatment
- New medications prescribed by other doctors
- Any suicidal or self harming thoughts, or thoughts of harming anyone else
- Any use of alcohol or street drugs

**On rare occasions, medication sometimes increases energy levels before improving mood, and a person with suicidal thoughts and increased energy levels could make a plan of self harm. With a combination of good and bad feelings, as well as improved energy, some may carry out suicide attempts. This is not the time to stop taking prescribed medication!*

Any suicidal thoughts must be reported immediately to the 24-hour Clinical Referral Hotline, your doctor, therapist or 911!