

Light

Natural light can help lift your mood. Being outside or near a window for even a few minutes a day, is beneficial.

Sleep

Sleep is a problem for many with depression, either sleeping too much or too little. Some tips for better sleep are:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time.
- Limit or eliminate daytime naps.
- Have a nighttime routine.
- Limit the amount of time you lay awake in bed. If you haven't fallen asleep within 30 minutes, get out of bed for a short while and try again later.
- Be aware of your caffeine and alcohol intake which can worsen sleep problems.

Education

Learning about depression and your particular symptoms is a very useful tool. Understanding your medical condition better can help you make changes, track your progress and alert you to any change in symptoms later on. Your depression care manager or physician can suggest some good books and websites.

Movement

Most people who struggle with depression have low energy. Taking a short walk, even beginning with 5 minutes a day, can make a difference.

Social

Even though you may not feel like being around others, socializing is an excellent self-management tool. Consider doing something you used to enjoy. To prevent being overwhelmed, keep the activity simple and time-limited.

Nutrition

Making simple changes to your eating habits can make a big difference over time. One example of a simple change is to add a vegetable or fruit to your daily intake.

Support

Talking with those who understand depression is also beneficial. If you don't have support people in your life, consider joining a support group in your area or online. Your depression care manager may be able to help you find one.

Mindfulness and stress management

Exploring different approaches to managing stress can be a valuable tool to those who are being affected by the stress in their lives. You can learn mind-quieting meditation techniques, calm breathing exercises, and discover gentle body movements and stretches that help reduce stress. Classes are available at UC Davis Medical Center.

Visit livinghealthy.ucdavis.edu for additional information, upcoming classes, tools and resources.

UCDAVIS
MEDICAL CENTER

livinghealthy.ucdavis.edu

Taking care of yourself

Managing your depression



UCDAVIS
MEDICAL CENTER

Avoiding depression can be thought of as fighting off a cold. If you take care of yourself at the first signs of a cold, you may be able to prevent it from getting worse. But if you ignore the body's warning signs, the cold may become more serious. The same principle is true for depression. Listed below are three common phases of depression:

Green light phase

This is the phase when your symptoms are mostly gone and you feel good most of the time.

Things to do during the green light phase:

- ❑ Stay on your medication and keep all follow-up appointments with your doctor. Although it may be tempting to stop your anti-depressant medication when you feel better, but it could lead to a return of depression. Talk to your doctor before changing or stopping medication.
- ❑ Identify your symptoms. It's important to know your own symptoms so you recognize them quickly if they return. Take a few minutes and list the main symptoms you struggled with before you improved.
- ❑ Continue good self-care skills.
- ❑ Identify and engage a support person to help you recognize depression symptoms if they return.

Yellow light phase

This is the phase when you may begin to notice depression symptoms. Changes in sleep patterns and appetite are common. You may have less energy or be more irritable. This is the time to act, before symptoms get worse.

Things to do during the yellow light phase:

- ❑ Contact your support person to let them know your depression symptoms may be

back. Ask if they have noticed any changes in your behavior or mood. Ask for their support.

- ❑ Call your physician for an appointment.
- ❑ Call your therapist for an appointment. If you do not have a therapist, consider finding one.
- ❑ Take a day off from responsibilities to relax and evaluate. Consider the following:
 - What can I do to immediately relieve some stress? (i.e. postpone major decisions, life changes ask for help with responsibilities)
 - Am I taking care of myself all the ways that I can?

Red light phase

This is the phase when you may be experiencing another depressive episode. You notice many of your symptoms have returned. Again, the sooner you get help, the sooner you can get better.

An immediate plan of action is:

- ❑ Do not wait any longer to seek help.
- ❑ Return to the things that have helped you get better in the past, if applicable.
- ❑ Call your doctor's office for an urgent appointment. Be honest about the severity of your symptoms.
- ❑ If you feel like hurting yourself or others, tell someone right away.
- ❑ Take at least three days off from all responsibilities, if possible, and use this time to increase self-care and seek support.

Numbers to call are:

- 911
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Doctor's office:
- Support person:

Tools for your tool-kit

Think of these tools as part of a depression "tool-kit". Just as you would need several tools to work on a project at home, you also need multiple "tools" to manage depression. Using these tools can set the wheels in motion toward getting and feeling better.

Start with just one tool and consider adding another as the first becomes easier. The order you choose is up to you.

Start — don't wait until you "feel" like doing it — take action and the feelings will follow.

Know your limits. There is a delicate balance between striving towards health and pushing yourself too much. Only you know how much you can realistically do.

Medications

Taking your medications as prescribed is very important for managing depression. Using a pill box is one way to remember your daily medication. Consider keeping a log of any side effects or changes to bring to your appointments. This helps your doctor help you.

Relaxation

You may not believe you "deserve" to relax because of low energy and/or negative thinking, but this is the best time to take care of yourself, just as you would if recovering from a physical injury or illness. You may find little things relaxing, such as taking a bath, lighting a candle, smelling a favorite scent, interacting with a pet, or listening to soothing music. Try engaging in an enjoyable activity or exercise.

Water

Drinking enough water helps your body and brain function properly. Try adding just one extra glass of water to your daily routine.

What are the treatments for depression?

There are many strategies for treating depression and healthcare professionals may suggest one or more types of treatment to target a particular individual's depression symptoms.

Therapy

Talking with a therapist or counselor can help people with depression. There are two main types of psychotherapy, or "talk therapy", commonly used to treat depression.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy (IPT). CBT teaches people to change negative ways of thinking and behaving that may contribute to their depression. IPT helps people understand and work through troubled personal relationships that may cause their depression or make it worse.

For mild to moderate depression, psychotherapy alone can be as effective as medications. However, for more severe depression, psychotherapy and medications are recommended.

Medications

Medications help balance chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. Different types of medications affect different chemicals in the brain.

Medications affect everyone differently. Sometimes several different types have to be tried before finding the one that works. If you start taking medication, track any side effects, and tell your doctor about them right away.

Lifestyle changes

Lifestyle changes, including improving sleep, nutrition, physical activity and exercise, and stress management can also be very powerful in helping to reduce or manage symptoms.

How can I help myself if I am depressed?

You may feel exhausted, helpless and hopeless. These feelings are the part of the depression and do not accurately reflect actual circumstances. As you begin to recognize your depression and begin treatment, negative thinking will fade.

Set realistic goals for yourself and break up large tasks into smaller ones. Set priorities and do what you are able as you are able.

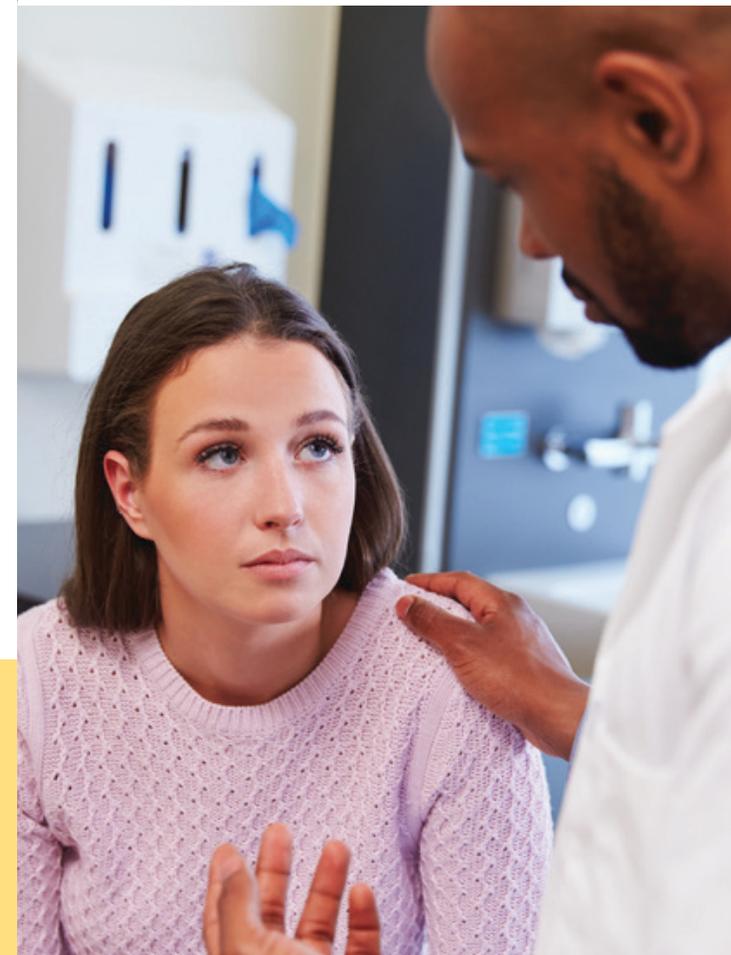
Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative. Try not to isolate yourself, and allow others to help you.

Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. Often during treatment for depression, sleep and appetite will begin to improve before your depression lifts.

Postpone important decisions, such as getting married or divorced, or changing jobs, until you feel better. Discuss decisions with others who know you well first.

Learning about depression

Depression is a real illness



UC DAVIS
MEDICAL CENTER

medicalcenter.ucdavis.edu

UC DAVIS
MEDICAL CENTER

What is depression?

Depression is an illness that impacts the brain. Everyone occasionally feels sad or down, but the feelings are usually fleeting and pass within a couple of days. When a person has a depressive disorder, it interferes with daily life, normal functioning, and causes pain for both the person with the disorder and those who care about him or her. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 21% of women and 12% of men in the U.S. will experience depression in their lifetime. Depression is a common and serious medical condition, and most who experience it need treatment to get better.

Forms of depression

There are several forms of depressive disorders. The most common are major depressive disorder and dysthymic disorder.

Major depressive disorder, also called major depression, is characterized by a combination of symptoms that interfere with a person's ability to work, sleep, study, eat, and enjoy once-pleasurable activities. Major depression is disabling and prevents a person from functioning normally or feeling well.

Dysthymic disorder, also called dysthymia, is characterized by long-term (two years or longer) but less severe symptoms that may not disable a person but can prevent one from functioning normally or feeling well. People with dysthymia may also experience one or more episodes of major depression during their lifetimes.

Signs and symptoms of depression

Not everyone with depression will have all of these symptoms. The signs and symptoms of depression are often different in men and women, children and adults.

Feelings

- Ongoing sad, anxious or empty feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Feeling irritable or restless

Thoughts

- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details
- Difficulty making decisions
- Thoughts of suicide or attempting suicide

Behaviors

- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies that were once enjoyable, including sex
- Withdrawing from people
- Substance abuse
- Missing work, school or other commitments

Physical problems

- Feeling tired often or all the time
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Ongoing aches and pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not go away

Why do people get depressed?

Depression occurs when there are changes in a person's brain chemistry. Additional factors, such as changes in hormone levels, medical illness, stress, trauma, loss or grief, or challenging

circumstances and lifestyle choices.

Depression can be different for men and women and at different points during a person's lifetime. Women are twice as likely to experience depression than men, and the peak onset of symptoms is between ages 15-24.

Depression can occur from a variety and combination of factors:

Genes

Some types of depression are passed on genetically and run in families. Genes are the "blueprints" for who we are, and we inherit them from our parents.

Brain chemistry and structure

When chemicals in the brain are not at the right levels, depression can occur. These chemicals, called neurotransmitters, help cells in the brain communicate with each other. By looking at pictures of the brain, scientists can also see that the structure of the brain in people who have depression looks different than in people who do not have depression

Environmental and psychological factors

Trauma, loss of a loved one, a difficult relationship, and other stressors can trigger depression. Scientists are working to figure out why depression occurs in some people but not in others with the same or similar experiences. They are also studying why some people recover quickly from depression while others do not.