



INFORM Yourself

DEPRESSION



You Did It!

Congratulations on completing the Focused Wellness program! This issue of **Inform Yourself** is meant to remind you of what you learned. You can draw on this information to help you stay on top of your health. You can also share the information with others. Having people around who understand your condition and how to support you can be a big help.

During your time in the Focused Wellness program, you learned about depression and how to manage it. Remember that part of managing depression is staying aware of your mood and how you feel. If any of the following symptoms last for more than 2 weeks and interfere with your daily activities, it's time to talk to your health care provider.

- Losing interest in normal activities or things you used to enjoy
- Feeling sad, irritable, hopeless, or worthless
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Sleep problems like waking early in the morning or oversleeping
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, and making decisions
- Aches or pains, headaches, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause
- Significant weight gain or loss



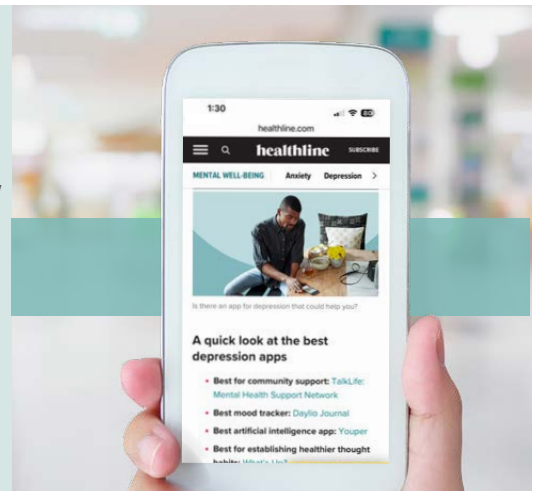
There may not be a cure for depression, but remember, depression *can* be controlled with the help of your health care provider!

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health, WebMD

Have You Tried a Mobile App?

There are several mobile applications (apps) you can use to help you with your depression. For example, Finch helps you monitor your moods and set goals. You can find a list of other apps at www.healthline.com/health/depression/top-iphone-android-apps. Most are free to download but certain features may cost extra.

If you haven't tried an app yet, you may want to check one out. Just remember that while technologies such as mobile apps can be helpful, they should be used to enhance your treatment plan, *not* replace it.



Physical Effects of Depression

Keep in mind that depression doesn't just affect how you feel emotionally. It also affects how you feel physically. Depression can make you more sensitive to aches and pains. It can also cause you to sleep too much or too little. The fatigue and sleep problems sometimes caused by depression can weaken your immune system. It can also cause higher levels of stress hormones. This makes it harder for your body to repair itself.

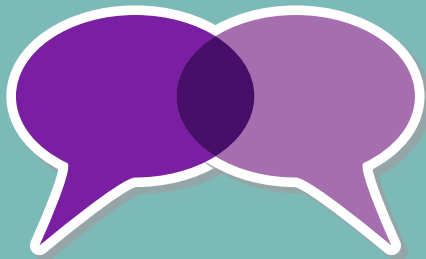
Depression can also make it harder to follow your provider's instructions. For example, if you don't have a lot of energy, you are less likely to feel like making healthy meals or exercising. This can cause weight gain. It can also raise your blood pressure and cholesterol levels and affect your blood sugar. These things can put you at higher risk for *other* chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Having depression along with another condition like diabetes or heart disease is called having "comorbid conditions." To learn more about what this means, read "Managing Comorbid Conditions" on the back page.



The effect depression has on your mood and your body and the way it puts you at risk for other health problems makes treatment important. Go to your appointments, including counseling/therapy. Take medication as directed, and do your best to follow your provider's recommendations for diet and exercise.

Source: WebMD

It's *Your* Health:



Speak Up &
Listen Up!

Source: Institute for Healthcare Improvement

Remember that every time you visit your health care provider, it's *your* time to ask questions and get the answers you need to be the healthiest you can be.

- Express any concerns you have about your health.
- Make sure you understand the "whats"—*what* your health problem is, *what* you should do about it, and *what* steps to take next.
- Also ask your provider the "whys." Sometimes understanding *why* you should do something will help motivate you to do it.
- If you don't understand something, speak up and ask your provider to tell you more or to explain it using different words.

If you have questions after you leave your appointment, you can call your health care provider's office. You can usually speak to a nurse or ask to leave a message for your provider. Your provider will call you back.



Your Treatment Plan: The Path to Better Health

A treatment plan helps you minimize the effects of depression and feel your best. If you have a plan, make sure you work with your provider to keep it updated and maintain your progress. If you don't have one, talk to your provider about making one. Treatment plans usually include the following.

Self-monitoring

Keeping track of how you feel every day can help you find out if there are any patterns to what affects your mood. One way to track these patterns is by using a mood diary. Try to write in it at least once a day and more often if you can. Making several entries a day can help you trace your mood at different times. Each entry should include the following:

1. Date and time
2. Your mood at that time or how it has changed since your last entry
3. What happened since your last entry. Include names of the people you were around, things you have done, and places you have gone.

Medication

If you have been prescribed medication, it is important that you take it exactly as prescribed. This can help you avoid setbacks in your treatment.

Psychotherapy (talk therapy or counseling)

You may go to a therapist or counselor to learn how to identify and change troubling thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. You can learn new ways of thinking and how to change habits that contribute to your depression. Keeping appointments for this type of treatment is just as important as adhering to any medication you may be prescribed.

Lifestyle changes

Making changes like the following can help:

- Get regular physical activity. Even walking for 30 minutes a day can help.

- Eat healthy, regular meals
- Connect with others and talk with people you trust about how you are feeling
- Avoid using alcohol, nicotine, or drugs
- Try to keep a regular bedtime and wake-up time

Follow-up

Keeping appointments is a key way to make sure all parts of your treatment plan are helping you as much as possible. It's also important to visit your provider to make sure your depression is not affecting any other areas of your health. If you feel you need to speak with someone, but don't have an appointment scheduled, please schedule one.

You can share your treatment plan and other information about your condition with all your health care providers and caregivers by completing a form giving consent for them to access your health information. Talk with your health care provider to learn more.

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Source: Health Day

Make an Action Plan

In addition to a long-term treatment plan (above), you should also have an action plan. An action plan helps with day-to-day management. It also helps you to recognize an emergency and what you should do. If you haven't made an action plan yet, now is a good time to get started! PrimeWest Health has a sample action plan on our website that you can fill out with your provider. Go to www.primewest.org/depression and click on *Depression Action Plan*.



Managing Comorbid Conditions

“Comorbid conditions” means having more than one health condition at the same time. Sometimes the conditions may not seem to affect each other. An example is having asthma and arthritis. Sometimes the connection is more direct. An example is having diabetes and depression. A person with diabetes may develop depression due to the stress of managing their diabetes.

It can be harder to take charge of your health when you have more than one condition. That means it's important to work with your health care provider to find a treatment plan that's right for you.



Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

If you need help for a suicidal or mental health crisis, have alcohol or drug use concerns, or if you just need someone to talk to, you can call or text **988** to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You can also chat at **988Lifeline.org**. There is no charge for calling, texting, or chatting. Trained counselors are available to provide confidential help 24 hours day, 7 days a week. Help is available, so please reach out!



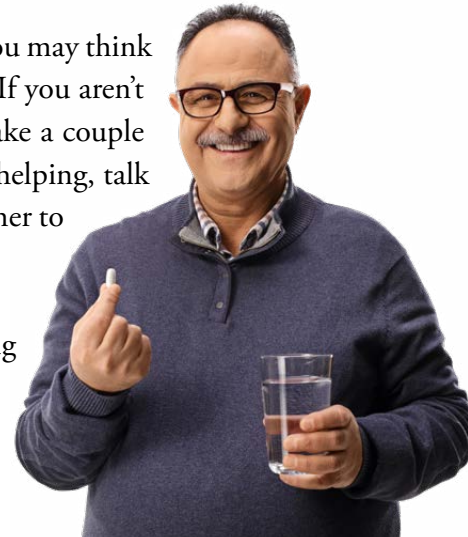
Depression Medication: Stick with It

If you have been prescribed antidepressant medication, keep taking it as recommended by your health care provider to get the best results.

If you are feeling better, you may not think you need your medication. However, it is important for you to keep taking it. Medication doesn't *cure* depression. It relieves the symptoms by increasing the levels of a chemical called serotonin in your brain. (Research shows that low levels of serotonin may cause depression.) If you stop taking the medication, the symptoms will often return. You might also experience withdrawal if you stop taking your medication, which can further affect your mood.

On the other hand, if you aren't feeling better, you may think it won't make a difference if you stop taking it. If you aren't feeling better, remember that medication can take a couple of weeks to work, so give it time. If it's still not helping, talk to your health care provider. You can work together to find a medication that is right for you.

Don't stop your medication without talking to your health care provider first. If you have questions or concerns, ask!



Note: The information in this magazine is not professional medical advice. It is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment. Do not ignore your health care provider's advice or wait to ask for it because of something you read here. Links to other websites are provided as a resource only. PrimeWest Health does not endorse, recommend, or pay for products or services offered by such sites.

1-866-431-0801 (toll free); TTY **1-800-627-3529** or **711**

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