What Is Depression?
Depression is much more than feeling sad. In fact, it is a mood disorder caused by chemicals in your brain. This means you will likely need help to manage your symptoms, which may include the following:

- Feeling sad or “empty”
- Losing interest in activities
- Sleeping or eating too much or too little
- Feeling tired or not having energy
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling hopeless, irritable, anxious, or guilty
- Having aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems
- Having thoughts of death or suicide

If you have any combination of these symptoms, talk to your health care provider. Depression is treatable. Most people who are diagnosed and get treatment are able to live happy, healthy lives.

Source: MedlinePlus

Keeping Track
When your health care provider asks you if there is anything that helps or makes your depression symptoms worse, do you have an answer? Or do you draw a blank? The more detail you can give your provider, the more effective your treatment will be. Because of this, you may want to try using a diary or journal to help organize your thoughts. Use your journal to record the things you do each day. For each entry, make note of the time of day, where you were, what you were doing, who was with you, and how you felt. This lets you look back and figure out what times of the day tend to be the hardest for you and what kinds of activities make you feel better or worse. You can take your journal to your appointments to help you through the conversation with your provider. If you start or change medications, you can also use your journal entries to help determine if your symptoms are improving and if you are experiencing any side effects.

There are also mood tracking apps available for download to your phone. One example is MindDoc. This free app allows you to track your mental health and mood in real time. It creates summaries based on this information that can help you and your provider identify patterns. You can find links to download this app at https://mymoodpath.com/en. There are a variety of similar apps your provider may be able to recommend. Keep in mind that not all apps are free.

Care Coordination and Case Management: We’re Here for You
PrimeWest Health provides Care Coordination and Case Management programs to help keep members healthy. These programs let us work with you and your health care providers to make sure you get the services you need. Your care coordinator or case manager can do the following:

- Help you when you have questions about your health care or prescriptions
- Schedule medical appointments as needed
- Promote good health practices that may prevent problems
- Help arrange services you need to stay safe and healthy at home

PrimeWest Health encourages you to take advantage of these programs. Let your care coordinator or case manager know when and how they can help you get the care and services you need. If you do not know who your care coordinator or case manager is, call one of the following:

- Member Services at 1-866-431-0801
- Jennifer at 1-888-588-4420 ext. 5342
- TTY users call 1-800-627-3529 or 711

These calls are free.
Depression can increase the risk of other mental and physical health conditions. Two of the most common are substance use disorder and heart disease.

**Substance use disorder**
Depression may lead to substance use disorder when alcohol or drugs are used regularly to escape the symptoms of depression. Symptoms of substance use disorder and depression combined with the effects of the addictive substance can be devastating. They can leave a person in a constant state of severe anxiety, disorganized thought, and even deeper depression. Recognizing and treating depression early can help prevent this. If you already have both depression and a substance use disorder, treatment can still help! Your mental health provider can help with a treatment plan to address both conditions.

**Heart disease**
Depression can make it hard to make good health choices. Lack of motivation and energy can make exercising and choosing a healthy diet seem overwhelming. It might seem easier to turn to alcohol, drugs, or smoking. These choices only make things worse. That’s because they all lead to worsening depression and increase the risk of heart disease. In addition, stress caused by depression can lead to high blood pressure. This also increases the risk of heart disease. You can help prevent heart disease by seeking treatment for depression. Managing your depression will help you make heart-healthy choices. If you already have both depression and heart disease, your provider can help you create a treatment plan for both.

**Antidepressants: Don’t Stop Too Soon**
Antidepressants are commonly prescribed and are very effective in treating depression. Unfortunately, sometimes people stop taking them without talking to their health care providers. Why?

- One of the most common reasons people stop is because they don’t notice a difference in their symptoms right away. Antidepressants don’t start to work on your symptoms immediately. They take around 2 – 4 weeks (sometimes longer) to reach their full effect. If you don’t notice a change right away, keep taking them and give them time to work.
- Some people stop because of side effects. It’s true that antidepressants—just like all medications—can cause side effects. You provider will tell you about possible side effects so you know what to look for. If you do experience side effects, don’t stop taking your medication. Call your provider to discuss what to do.
- Some people decide to stop their antidepressants once they feel better, thinking they don’t need them anymore. However, once you have found an antidepressant that is effective, it’s best to take it for 6 months to a year to decrease the risk of your symptoms coming back. Time frames are different for everyone. Check with your provider before making any changes.

It’s not a good idea to stop your antidepressant without the oversight of a provider or to stop “cold turkey.” Doing this can cause withdrawal symptoms. If and when you and your provider decide it is time to stop taking your antidepressant, work with them to determine a safe way to decrease your dose over time.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health
Working with Your Provider

If the symptoms in the article “What Is Depression?” seem to describe how you feel, you should make an appointment with a health care provider. But what type of a provider should you go to? A good starting point is your primary care provider. They can give you a diagnosis, discuss treatment options, and prescribe medications. They can also refer you to providers who specialize in mental health such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors.

“Getting treatment for depression early can prevent future relapses, which can be more difficult to treat. Treating depression will often improve sleep, work performance, and relationships with coworkers, family, and friends.”

Susan Paulson, MD, PrimeWest Health Chief Senior Medical Director

Treatment and action plans

Your primary care provider and/or mental health providers can help you create a treatment plan. Treatment plans are tailored to you and can include medication(s), psychotherapy or counseling, stress management techniques, and a variety of other interventions. In addition, your treatment plan should outline how often to follow up with your provider. It should also address what to do if your symptoms get worse. The more active you are in creating your treatment plan with your provider, the more likely you will be to follow it.

You should also have an action plan. Depression can make it hard to organize your thoughts. An action plan reminds you what steps to take based on how you are feeling. You can find a sample depression action plan on our website. Go to www.primewest.org/depression and click on Depression Action Plan. Take it with you to your next appointment and fill it out with your provider.

If you ever feel that your treatment or action plan isn’t working, talk to your provider. You can work together to make adjustments.

Overall health

A healthy body is just as important as a healthy mind, and physical and mental health often go hand in hand. You and your provider can discuss ways to take care of your physical health that will also help your mental health. For example, exercising and eating a healthy diet are good for both body and mind. Also be sure to talk about preventive health measures (e.g., an annual flu shot) you can take to avoid other health problems.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
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.
Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, call the above number.

Attention. Si vous avez besoin d’une aide gratuite pour interpréter le présent document, veuillez appeler au numéro ci-dessus.

Thov ua twb zoo nyeem. Yog hais tias koj xav tau kev pab txhais lus rau tsab ntaub ntawv no pub dawb, ces hu rau tus najnpawb xov tooj saum toj no.

알려드립니다. 이 문서에 대한 이해를 돕기 위해 무료로 제공되는 도움을 받으시려면 위의 전화번호로 연락하십시오.

โปรดทราบ. ถ้าคุณต้องการตรวจสอบความเข้าใจในแบบแปลเอกราสมมิตรี, จึงโปรดใช้ทีช่วยเหลือที่ด้านล่าง.

Hubachiisa. Dokumentiin kun tola akka siif hiikamu gargaarsa hoo feete, lakkooobsa gubbatti kennname bilbili.

Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в устном переводе данного документа, позвоните по указанному выше телефону.

Digniin. Haddii aad u baahantahay caawimaad lacag-la’aan ah ee tarjumaadda (afeelinta) qoraalkan, lambarka kore wac.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para interpretar este documento, llame al número indicado arriba.

Chú ý. Nếu quý vị cần được giúp dịch tài liệu này miễn phí, xin gọi số bên trên.
Civil Rights Notice

Discrimination is against the law. PrimeWest Health does not discriminate on the basis of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- creed
- religion
- sexual orientation
- public assistance status
- age
- disability (including physical or mental impairment)
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
- marital status
- political beliefs
- medical condition
- health status
- receipt of health care services
- claims experience
- medical history
- genetic information

You have the right to file a discrimination complaint if you believe you were treated in a discriminatory way by PrimeWest Health. You can file a complaint and ask for help filing a complaint in person or by mail, phone, fax, or email at:

Rebecca Fuller, Civil Rights Coordinator
PrimeWest Health
3905 Dakota St
Alexandria, MN 56308
Toll Free: 1-866-431-0801
TTY: 1-800-627-3529 or 711
Fax: 1-320-762-8750
Email: rebecca.fuller@primewest.org

Auxiliary Aids and Services: PrimeWest Health provides auxiliary aids and services, like qualified interpreters or information in accessible formats, free of charge and in a timely manner to ensure an equal opportunity to participate in our health care programs. Contact PrimeWest Health at memberservices@primewest.org, or call Member Services at 1-866-431-0801 or TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711. The call is free.

Language Assistance Services: PrimeWest Health provides translated documents and spoken language interpreting, free of charge and in a timely manner, when language assistance services are necessary to ensure limited English speakers have meaningful access to our information and services. Contact PrimeWest Health at memberservices@primewest.org, or call Member Services at 1-866-431-0801 or TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711. The call is free.

Civil Rights Complaints
You have the right to file a discrimination complaint if you believe you were treated in a discriminatory way by PrimeWest Health. You may also contact any of the following agencies directly to file a discrimination complaint.
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
You have the right to file a complaint with the OCR, a federal agency, if you believe you have been discriminated against because of any of the following:
- race
- color
- national origin
- age
- disability
- sex
- religion (in some cases)

Contact the OCR directly to file a complaint:
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Midwest Region
233 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 240
Chicago, IL 60601
Customer Response Center: Toll-free: 800-368-1019
TDD Toll-free: 800-537-7697
Email: ocrmail@hhs.gov

Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR)
In Minnesota, you have the right to file a complaint with the MDHR if you have been discriminated against because of any of the following:
- race
- color
- national origin
- religion
- creed
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marital status
- public assistance status
- disability

Contact the MDHR directly to file a complaint:
Minnesota Department of Human Rights
540 Fairview Avenue North, Suite 201
St. Paul, MN 55104
651-539-1100 (voice)
800-657-3704 (toll-free)
711 or 800-627-3529 (MN Relay)
651-296-9042 (fax)
Info.MDHR@state.mn.us (email)

Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)
You have the right to file a complaint with DHS if you believe you have been discriminated against in our health care programs because of any of the following:
- race
- color
- national origin
- religion (in some cases)
- age
- disability (including physical or mental impairment)
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
Complaints must be in writing and filed within 180 days of the date you discovered the alleged discrimination. The complaint must contain your name and address and describe the discrimination you are complaining about. We will review it and notify you in writing about whether we have authority to investigate. If we do, we will investigate the complaint.

DHS will notify you in writing of the investigation’s outcome. You have the right to appeal if you disagree with the decision. To appeal, you must send a written request to have DHS review the investigation outcome. Be brief and state why you disagree with the decision. Include additional information you think is important.

If you file a complaint in this way, the people who work for the agency named in the complaint cannot retaliate against you. This means they cannot punish you in any way for filing a complaint. Filing a complaint in this way does not stop you from seeking out other legal or administrative actions.

Contact DHS directly to file a discrimination complaint:
   Civil Rights Coordinator
   Minnesota Department of Human Services
   Equal Opportunity and Access Division
   P.O. Box 64997
   St. Paul, MN 55164-0997
   651-431-3040 (voice) or use your preferred relay service

American Indians can continue or begin to use tribal and Indian Health Services (IHS) clinics. We will not require prior approval or impose any conditions for you to get services at these clinics. For elders age 65 years and older this includes Elderly Waiver (EW) services accessed through the tribe. If a doctor or other provider in a tribal or IHS clinic refers you to a provider in our network, we will not require you to see your primary care provider prior to the referral.