

Understanding Depression: A Patient Guide

Depression is more than just feeling sad – it's a treatable medical condition



Remember: You are not alone. Depression affects about 1 in 10 people worldwide, and with the right support and strategies, most people improve significantly.



COMMON SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- ✓ Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- ✓ Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- ✓ Fatigue or decreased energy
- ✓ Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- ✓ Changes in sleep (too much or too little)
- ✓ Changes in appetite or weight
- ✓ Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, or guilt
- ✓ Physical aches and pains without clear cause
- ✓ Thoughts of death or suicide



EXERCISE: A POWERFUL TOOL



Best types: Walking/jogging, Yoga, Strength training, Tai chi/qigong, Mixed aerobic exercises



Goal: At least 150 minutes per week of moderate activity



Why it works: Releases endorphins, reduces inflammation, regulates brain chemicals



SLEEP AND DEPRESSION

- Keep consistent schedule
- Create relaxing bedtime routine
- Make bedroom sleep-friendly (cool, dark, quiet)
- Limit screens before bed
- Avoid caffeine after noon
- Get morning light exposure



DIGITAL TOOLS AND APPS

- Look for apps with CBT features, mood tracking, behavioral activation
- Check PsyberGuide for app ratings



DAILY HABITS CHECKLIST

- Get physical activity
- Eat regular, nutritious meals
- Get connect with someone
- Get outside for natural light
- Do one pleasant activity
- Practice relaxation/mindfulness
- Maintain consistent sleep schedule
- Take medications as prescribed
- Limit alcohol
- Be kind to yourself



SELF-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THAT WORK

- ▶ Completing your treatment plan
- ▶ Leaving the house regularly
- ▶ Engaging in leisure activities
- ▶ Finding strategies to create pleasurable distractions
- ▶ Identifying the cause of your depression
- ▶ Staying connected with supportive people



NUTRITION AND DIET

Mediterranean Diet recommended:

- Fruits and vegetables (variety and color)
- Whole grains, Fish (especially fatty fish 2x weekly)
- Nuts, seeds, olive oil, legumes
- Limited red meat and processed foods
- **Foods to limit:** Ultra-processed foods, sugary drinks, excessive alcohol



MINDFULNESS AND RELAXATION

- Simple practice: Focus on breath, start with 5 minutes daily
- Other techniques: Progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, guided imagery, yoga



PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT OPTIONS



Psychotherapy: CBT, MBCT, Interpersonal Therapy

Medication: Antidepressants for moderate to severe depression

Combined treatment often most effective



WHEN TO SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY

- Thoughts of harming yourself or suicide
- Unable to care for yourself
- Using alcohol/drugs to cope
- Symptoms getting significantly worse
- Unable to function at work, school, or home



CRISIS RESOURCES ☎ 911 (Emergency)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: ☎ 988 (call or text)

Crisis Text Line: 📱 Text HOME to 741741

Seeking help is a sign of strength. Depression is a medical condition, and getting treatment is the right thing to do.