

Process for Managing Depression

A diagnosis of depression is a chronic condition and it requires your participation in making decisions about your care, setting realistic goals for improvement and helping your primary care physician monitor your condition.

The steps your primary care physician will follow to treat your condition

At the office visit

After your primary care physician has diagnosed you with depression, he or she will talk with you about:

- The severity of your condition.
- The possible choices for treatment.
- An initial treatment plan, in which he or she may do one of the following:
 - > Encourage you to wait a couple of weeks to see if symptoms decrease.
 - > Recommend an antidepressant medication.

- > Recommend psychological counseling with a mental health specialist.
- > Recommend both an antidepressant medication and psychological counseling.

Following the office visit

You will be either scheduled for a follow-up appointment or contacted by telephone. Follow-up appointments or telephone contacts may be as frequent as every one to two weeks initially. The purpose is to see if your symptoms are improving, staying the same or getting worse.

- If you've selected **psychological counseling with your primary care physician**, he or she will continue to talk with you, listen, give advice, add perspective and try to address your concerns. He or she may recommend other types of treatment if your symptoms are getting worse or not improving after a period of time.
- If you've selected **psychological counseling with a mental health specialist**, your primary care physician will ask you about your symptoms and daily routines at work, home and with family and friends. With your permission, he or she will communicate with your mental health specialist to find out if treatment is helping and address any medical issues that relate to your depression.



- If you've selected **antidepressant treatment or a combination of antidepressant and psychological counseling**, your primary care physician will check to make sure that the medication is working and whether you are having any side effects or difficulties. Since your symptoms may return if treatment is discontinued, it is important to call your primary care physician if you are thinking about stopping your medication.

Scheduling periodic and annual check-ups

Your primary care physician needs to monitor your depression over time to make sure that it doesn't recur. He or she will also evaluate the treatment plan to make sure it continues to be effective. Depression requires periodic check-ups with your primary care physician, just like hypertension, diabetes or heart disease. Your primary care physician will establish a check-up schedule that is just right for your specific condition.

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