

Managing depression

What to expect and what you should know as you start care

Depression is a serious condition. So it's important for you to stay involved in decisions about your care. Set goals for your health you think you can reach, and let your doctor know how you are doing.

At the office visit

If your doctor diagnoses you with depression, he or she will:

- Explain how severe your condition is
- Discuss possible choices for treatment
- Set up an initial treatment plan

Depending on your situation, your doctor may recommend you:

- Wait a couple of weeks to see if you feel better
- Take an antidepressant medication
- Undergo counseling with a mental health specialist
- Take an antidepressant medication and go to counseling

After your office visit

Your doctor will want to see if you improve, stay the same or get worse. So, he or she may ask you to call or come in every one to two weeks. As you go along in treatment, your checkups may be spaced further apart.

More about your treatment choices

Counseling with your primary care doctor

Your doctor will set up time to talk with you. He or she will listen, give advice, and try to address your concerns. In time, if you feel worse or do not improve, you may be asked to try a different treatment.

Counseling with a mental health specialist

You will still have primary care checkups. Your doctor will ask you about your symptoms and daily routines at work, home and with family and friends. He or she will also help you with any medical issues related to your depression. If you allow it, he or she will talk with your mental health specialist to find out if treatment is helping.

Antidepressant medications alone or with counseling

Your primary care doctor will check to make sure that the medication is working. Tell your doctor if you have any side effects or difficulties. Do not stop taking your medication — even if you feel better — until your doctor says you can stop. Stopping too quickly can cause depression to return. Please talk to your doctor first if you are thinking about stopping your medication.

Scheduling checkups

As with any other condition, your doctor needs to see you or talk to you regularly to make sure that you are okay and that treatment is working. Be sure you return for visits as your doctor suggests. And, don't forget to ask questions. You play an important role in your own care.

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