

# SpeakUP™



## What you should know about adult depression

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was developed in collaboration with

**American Psychiatric Association**

[www.psychiatry.org](http://www.psychiatry.org)

**Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance**

[www.dbsalliance.org](http://www.dbsalliance.org)

**Mental Health America**

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

**NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness**

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

**National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems**

[www.naphs.org](http://www.naphs.org)

**National Association of Social Workers**

[www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

**National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors**

[www.nasmhpd.org](http://www.nasmhpd.org)

**National Institute of Mental Health**

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

The Joint Commission is the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.

*Helping health care organizations help patients*

Everybody feels blue or sad sometimes. Depression is more than just feeling sad. When you are depressed you lose interest in activities, and you may feel overwhelmed, agitated or isolated. You may feel like things will never get better. If you have these feelings for two weeks or longer, you may be depressed.

Depression is a common, but serious condition. The good news is that you are not alone and you *can* get better and feel like yourself again. This brochure gives you information about depression, questions to ask a doctor or therapist, and advice on how to speak up if you or a loved one needs help.

### What are the warning signs of depression?

- Feeling sad, down, irritable, nervous, or out of sorts
- Loss of interest or pleasure in almost all activities
- Feeling worthless, guilty, hopeless, or helpless
- Eating more or less than usual
- Difficulty thinking or making decisions
- Little or no interest in sex
- Low energy, tiredness
- Feeling restless or agitated
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Withdrawal from others
- Talking about or having thoughts of death or suicide

**Get help now if you are thinking about suicide!**  
Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) or go to [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).  
You can also call 911 or go to an emergency room.

## Who can be affected by depression?

Depression can affect anyone at any age. The following may put you at risk:

- Family history of depression, bipolar disorder, or substance abuse
- Having another mental health condition, such as:
  - Previous episode of depression
  - Post traumatic stress disorder
  - Anxiety disorder
  - Alcohol and other substance abuse
- Stressful life events, such as divorce, job loss or the death or illness of someone close to you; even positive events such as a baby, marriage, graduation, or new job
- Trauma, such as childhood neglect or abuse, experiencing or witnessing violence, or surviving disasters
- Some prescription medicines
- Health issues, such as:
  - Thyroid disease and other hormone disorders
  - Cancer
  - Diabetes, heart disease, kidney failure, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, stroke
  - Serious injury needing extensive rehabilitation

## How can you get help? Where do you start?

The important thing is to speak up and ask for help. Talk to a friend, family member, doctor, or reach out to someone in your faith community. A doctor can help determine what is going on, why it is happening, and how to help. See if there is an employee assistance program, known as an EAP, at your job. You can also call the local community mental health center, a therapist, or a help line.

## What are your treatment options?

Your options may include talk therapy or counseling, medicines, support groups, and other help. The treatments often work better when they are used together.

## Can you get better without treatment?

Depression can be damaging when left untreated. It can lead to relationship problems, unemployment, and even suicide. Do not wait and hope that the symptoms will go away. Drugs or alcohol may seem like a quick fix, but they can make your depression worse. Do not be ashamed or embarrassed to seek treatment. You deserve treatment. Treatment works.

## What should you know about therapy?

Talk therapy is an effective way to treat your depression. Therapy can help you learn about your depression and find ways to manage it. You should feel safe and comfortable discussing your thoughts and feelings with your therapist. If you feel therapy is not working, it is OK to ask for a referral to someone else. You should also ask:

- How will therapy help you?
- What kind of therapy do they recommend?
- Have they treated someone with symptoms like yours?
- How long should treatment last?
- How do they develop a treatment plan? The plan should be based on your needs, strengths, preferences, and goals.
- Is treatment confidential?
- What is their availability after hours? On weekends? In case of emergency?

## What should you know about medicines?

You may be prescribed medicine for your depression. Work with your doctor to find one that works well for you. Make sure you provide a list of your current medicines and supplements.

- You should know:
  - There are different medicines that are used to treat depression.
  - You may have to try more than one.
  - It may take a while to get the right dose.
- You should ask:
  - Why is the medicine right for you?
  - What are the side effects?
  - What if you miss a dose?
  - What if you are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant?
  - What should you do if the medicine makes you feel worse?

## Can a family member or friend help you?

Depression can make it hard to reach out to people for help. However, isolating yourself can make your depression worse. It may be good to have a family member or friend, also called an advocate, be a partner in your care. Your advocate can:

- Help you make and get to appointments
- Write down instructions and ask questions
- Motivate you and help you focus on your strengths and goals for treatment
- Recognize changes in your condition
- Ask for help if you are not getting what you need

## What can you do to feel better?

Feeling better takes time. There are many things you can do to help your treatment be successful. Your doctor or therapist can give you advice on where to start. You should:

- Follow your treatment plan. Talk to your doctor or therapist if you need to change something.
  - **DO NOT** abruptly stop treatment or medicines if things are not working. Be patient. It may take time to see improvements.
  - **DO NOT** abruptly stop treatment or medicines if you are feeling better. This could cause the depression to return.
- Stick to your daily routine. Go to work. Go to school. Get out of the house. See other people.
- Exercise and eat a healthy diet
- Get enough sleep
- Reduce stress and practice relaxation techniques
- Spend time outdoors
- Join a support group
- Be good to yourself. Depression is not your fault.

## Where can you find more information?

Information and referrals, 800-950-NAMI (6264) or NAMI HelpLine, [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

Locate a treatment program, <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

Mental Health First Aid, [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org)

Mood disorder information and referrals, 800-826-3632, [www.DBAlliance.org/FindSupport](http://www.DBAlliance.org/FindSupport)

Help in paying for medicines, [www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org)

[www.jointcommission.org](http://www.jointcommission.org)