

M1730 Managing Depression

Help for depression can come in a variety of ways. Sometimes mild depression can be improved with self help measures alone. Prolonged or severe depression usually requires professional treatment. Professional intervention and self-help measures can reinforce each other.

Profession Help

Antidepressant medications are often used to treat depression. Antidepressants often take some time before they are effective. Some people may notice improvement in a week or two, but typically antidepressant medications **must be taken regularly** for six to eight weeks before their full effect is felt. If you miss a dose of medication, take the next regularly scheduled dose – do not “double up” as this may cause increased side effects. Never stop a medication without talking to your doctor.

Self Help



- **Support:** Look for a support group. Avoid isolation.
- **Exercise:** Be physically active at least 30 minutes every day. Walking, stationary biking and gardening can be enjoyable ways to be active.
- **Avoid or reduce stress:** Keep a journal. When you are feeling stressed out, write down your thoughts.



- **Get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night.** Talk to your doctor if you have regular insomnia or other sleep problems.
- **Avoid alcohol and other mind-altering substances:** Alcohol, tobacco, excess caffeine and drugs can make depression worse. Alcohol is a depressant. Tobacco and caffeine are stimulants and can cause increased anxiety.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Try to eat a low fat, high fiber diet. Eat a variety of foods that include fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.



- **Practice positive thinking:** Listen to your internal thoughts. Replace negative thoughts with messages of hope and affirmation. Practice positive thinking even if you do not believe it. Over time, positive thinking can become a habit, and can help improve many aspects of your health.
- **Find ways to laugh and amuse yourself:** Spend at least 30 minutes every day doing your most pleasurable activity.