

Preventing Depression From Coming Back: Care Instructions



Overview

Some people have depression symptoms that come back. Depression often comes and goes during a lifetime. But there are some things you can do to help lower the chance of your depression coming back.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

What do you need to know?

Know your risk of depression coming back

Many things can make a person more likely to have depression again. These include having depression symptoms that continue after treatment, a previous episode of depression, and a history of childhood abuse or neglect.

It is important to know your risk and to recognize warning signs of depression symptoms returning. Once you know these things, you will be better able to keep it from happening to you.

Know the warning signs of depression returning

The two main symptoms of depression coming back are:

- Feeling sad or hopeless.
- Losing interest in your daily activities.

You may have other symptoms, such as:

- You eat more or less than usual.
- You sleep too much or not enough.
- You feel restless and unable to sit still.
- You feel unable to move.
- You feel tired all the time.
- You feel unworthy or guilty without an obvious reason.
- You have problems concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.
- You think often about death or suicide.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your medicine as prescribed. Call your doctor if you have any problems with your medicine.
- Continue to take your medicine after your symptoms improve. Taking your medicine for at least 6 months after you feel better can help keep you from getting depressed again. If your depression keeps coming back, your doctor may recommend you take medicine even longer.
- Continue counseling. It may help prevent depression from returning, especially if you've had multiple episodes of depression. Talk with your counselor if you are having a hard time attending your sessions or you think the sessions aren't working. Don't just stop going.
- Eat healthy foods. Include fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains in your diet each day.
- Get regular exercise. Go for a walk or jog, ride your bike, or play sports with friends.
- See your doctor right away if you have new symptoms or feel that your depression is coming back.
- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Try for 8 hours of sleep a night.
- Avoid using illegal drugs or marijuana and drinking alcohol.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME** to **741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

When should you call for help?

Call anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You are thinking about suicide or are threatening suicide.

- You feel you cannot stop from hurting yourself or someone else.
- You hear or see things that aren't real.
- You think or speak in a bizarre way that is not like your usual behavior.

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Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You are talking or writing about death.
- You are drinking a lot of alcohol or using drugs.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You find it hard or it's getting harder to deal with school, a job, family, or friends.
- You think your treatment is not helping or you are not getting better.
- Your symptoms get worse or you get new symptoms.
- You have any problems with your antidepressant medicines, such as side effects, or you are thinking about stopping your medicine.
- You are having manic behavior, such as having very high energy, needing less sleep than normal, or showing risky behavior such as spending money you don't have or abusing others verbally or physically.

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