

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

Depression: Treatment Options

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Millions of Americans suffer from depression. Without knowing it, people can experience symptoms of depression for weeks, months or years. Depression can affect people of any age, gender or race. Untreated depression can affect regular activities at home and work and, in severe cases, put one's life at risk. Early identification and treatment of depression are key to reducing symptoms and recurrence. Treatment usually involves a combination of self-care, psychotherapy, and/or the use of medications.

SELF-CARE

Self-care is defined as any activity we do to protect our mental, physical and emotional health.

Examples of self-care:

- Getting at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week (30 minutes per day for five days) for the average American adult
- Mindfulness: noticing what is occurring around you can help you calm down when you are sad, angry or frustrated
 - A simple grounding exercise called the 5-4-3-2-1 technique utilizes your five senses. Take a deep breath and begin to acknowledge five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste.
- Breathing exercises: make biological changes in the body that benefit both physical and mental health
 - A simple breathing exercise is called belly breathing. Start by laying on your back with your knees bent with one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest. Breathe in slowly through your nose, making your belly rise while your chest remains still. Focus on contracting your abs as you exhale through pursed lips. Practice for 5–10 minutes daily.
- Staying connected with friends/family
- Maintaining a healthy diet
- Sleeping about eight hours each night, though different people may require different amounts of sleep

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Many types of psychotherapies are available:

- Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT): helps you understand your thoughts and behavior, and how they affect you
- Interpersonal therapy: helps you understand the problems you may have in your relationships
- Counseling (solution-focused therapy): helps you find new solutions to problems in your life.

MEDICATIONS

There are many different types of medications available in treating depression. Examples of commonly used antidepressants include:

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors
- Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors
- Tricyclic antidepressants

Everyone responds differently to these medications and may need to try a variety of dosages and combinations. It is important to be patient in this process and honest with your doctor about how it affects you. Depending on the response, your doctor will continue, discontinue or change your antidepressants. Depending on the individual, the side effects of antidepressants vary. Your doctor will inform you of the potential side effects of your treatment.

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