

Help for depression

Depression can greatly interfere with day-to-day life. But there are many effective treatments available that can help you manage your depression symptoms.

Keep reading to learn about the different types of medications and treatment plans available to treat depression, plus how to find mental health professionals in your area.

Medications for depression

Depression medications are a common part of treatment. Some people use these medications for a short time, while others use them long term. Your doctor will take multiple factors into consideration before prescribing any medication, including:

- its possible side effects
- your current health concerns
- possible drug interactions
- cost
- your specific symptoms

Medications that are commonly used to treat depression include the following:

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors

It's believed that SNRIs help treat depression by keeping up the levels of serotonin and norepinephrine — chemical messengers that affect mood — in your brain.

Therapy for depression

If you're experiencing symptoms related to mild to moderate depression, you may benefit from therapy with a trusted, qualified therapist. Many experts will try therapy prior to trying medication. However, if depression is more severe, many will try a combination of therapy and medication.

- **Talk therapy.** You may be given homework, such as tracking your moods or writing in journals. This will help you to continue your treatment outside of appointments. Your therapist can also teach you exercises to reduce stress and anxiety and help you understand your illness. A therapist can also help you create strategies to identify and avoid any triggers that exacerbate your depression. This includes developing coping mechanisms for when you experience these triggers. Talk therapy may resolve temporary or mild depression. It can often treat severe depression but not without other treatments such as medication.
- **Cognitive therapy.** Cognitive therapy aims to determine the negative thoughts and emotions that exacerbate depression. This type of therapy helps people identify these unhelpful thought patterns and to turn them into more productive ones. Usually, cognitive therapy is a short-term and last between 6 weeks to 4 months.
- **Behavioral therapy.** Behavioral therapy seeks to identify and help change potentially self-destructive or unhealthy behaviors. It functions on the idea that all behaviors are learned and that unhealthy behaviors can be changed. The focus of treatment is often on current problems and how to change them. This type of therapy usually focuses on helping patients engage in activities that will enhance their feelings of well-being.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy.** Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of psychotherapy. This form of therapy modifies thought patterns in order to change moods and behaviors. It's based on the idea that negative

actions or feelings are the result of current distorted beliefs or thoughts, not unconscious forces from the past. CBT is a blend of cognitive therapy and behavioral therapy. It focuses on addressing both the negative thought patterns and the behaviors that contribute to depression.

Additional treatment options

There are a variety of alternative and natural treatments that are often used to treat depression. These treatments shouldn't be used without consulting your doctor first, especially if you're taking prescription antidepressants or other medications.

Natural remedies

Sometimes it can be helpful to use complementary or natural treatments for depression alongside traditional ones. Be sure to check in with your doctor before adding supplements or other complementary treatments to your routine.

Natural remedies include:

- St. John's wort
- omega 3 fatty acids
- acupuncture
- massage therapy
- relaxation techniques
- meditation

How to find treatment near you

The first step in getting treatment for depression is making an appointment with your general practitioner. They can recommend doctors in your area.

If you're religious, ask your religious leader if they have counselors to recommend. Some people prefer faith-based counseling, which incorporates their religion into a treatment plan.

You can also check healthcare databases for therapists, psychiatrists, and counselors. These databases can provide you with information such as certifications, accepted insurance providers, and reviews left by other people. You can start with these databases:

- Anxiety and Depression Association of America
- Psychology Today
- GoodTherapy.org

How to find the right treatment

Sticking to your treatment plan is one of the most important things you can do. It's easy to get discouraged in the first few weeks of treatment, and you may feel like you don't want to continue. All types of treatment can take a few months before you notice a difference.

It can also feel like you're doing much better, causing you to stop treatment altogether. Never stop treatment without consulting your doctor first.

You should feel comfortable talking to your therapist. If you don't, try switching to a new one. You may have to meet with several therapists before you find the one that's right for you.

You should also talk to your therapist about your feelings toward your therapy sessions and your overall treatment plan. This allows them to work with you and make changes if your treatment plan isn't working.

Finding the right treatment is often a trial-and-error process. If one doesn't work, it's good to move on. If 2 or more months have gone by and you've stuck to a treatment but don't feel any relief from the depression, it's likely not working for you.

Talk to your doctor immediately if your:

- depression doesn't improve after several month of treatment
- symptoms have improved, but you still don't feel like yourself
- symptoms get worse

These are signs that your treatment plan isn't working for you.