Side effects:
The first week is the hardest. Watch for side effects, including:
• Dry mouth
• Headache
• Upset stomach
• More tired or anxious

These usually go away or get better. If they don’t go away in a few days, tell your doctor.

Contact your doctor immediately if you:
• Have trouble sitting still
• Cannot sleep.
• Feel suicidal.

Be sure to ask about the long-term side effects for any medication you take.

When will I get better?
It takes from four to six weeks for most people to start feeling better. Don’t give up if medication doesn’t work right away. Within a few weeks, you should start to notice changes.

Don’t get discouraged. If you don’t feel better after a few weeks, talk to your doctor. There are many medications for depression. Your doctor can select another prescription for you.

How do I know when I am getting better?
• Your sleep is more regular.
• Your appetite has returned.
• You can concentrate better.
• Your mood is improved.
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This depends on your health and your symptoms. Some use medication for a few months to overcome a single bout of depression. Some individuals take medication for a year. And some choose to stay on a medication that works for many years. You and your doctor can decide what is right for you.

Never feel embarrassed or bad about taking medication for depression. Remember, depression is a biological illness like high blood pressure or diabetes. In some people, it requires lifelong care. The good news is that medication can help you feel well again quickly. With treatment and support, you can have your life back.

For further information, please speak with your doctor, nurse, or therapist. Or you can call the MBHP Clinical Access Line at 1-800-495-0086 (press 1 for English or 2 for Spanish, then 4, then 1 to skip prompts). You can call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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Treating Depression

• What is Depression?
• Treatment Options
• About Medications

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Depression is a medical illness, like diabetes or asthma. One out of five people will suffer from depression in his or her lifetime. Depression is a disease that affects all ages, races, and cultural groups. Nearly 11 million Americans will have a significant episode of depression sometime in their lives.

What are the symptoms of depression?
• Feeling sad most of the day for at least two weeks
• Having a lack of interest in the things you always enjoyed
• Feeling empty or numb
• Feeling you don’t care about anything
• Sleeping too much or having trouble sleeping
• Having a hard time concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
• Being irritable
• Having frequent thoughts of death or suicide
• Feeling aches and pains that don’t go away, even with medication

People with five or more of these symptoms for more than two weeks have depression and should see their doctors.

Common questions about depression
Can people just “snap out of it”?
No. You don’t expect someone with asthma to “snap out of it” if someone with diabetes to just get over it. Depression is also a medical illness. Instead of affecting the heart or lungs, depression affects chemicals in the brain.

Can you have a difficult or sad personal situation trigger depression?
Yes. A sad situation could be a death in the family or having a chronic disease, such as diabetes. It can be compared to a heart attack that is triggered by shoveling snow. But sad situations are not necessary to trigger an episode of depression. You can just wake up one morning with the disease.

Can depression run in the family?
Yes. Close relatives of someone with depression have three times higher rates of depression than those not related. However, you can get depression even if no one else in your family has the illness.

Is depression really that serious?
Yes. Without treatment, up to 15% of those with depression commit suicide. Many others face broken relationships, cannot work, or start to use alcohol or drugs.

Can treatment for depression really make a difference?
In over 80% of cases, medications, therapy, or both, help to reduce the pain and despair of depression in about two to four weeks, sometimes sooner. Most people return to their lives they led before they became ill.

Can I get depression again?
Some people only have one episode of depression. Many have episodes of depression throughout their lives. However, with treatment, those with depression can live normal, stable, happy lives.

The important first step
You have taken the first important step to feeling well again by talking to your doctor! Be sure to take your medication and follow other recommended treatments just as you would if you had diabetes or asthma. Remember, you too can feel better and get your life back.

Famous people with depression:

- Abraham Lincoln • president
- Charles Dickens • writer
- Winston Churchill • British leader
- Ted Turner • founder of CNN & TMC channels
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- Ludwig van Beethoven • music composer
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- Terry Bradshaw • sports star and commentator
- Michelangelo • artist
- Winston Churchill • British leader
- Charles Dickens • writer

What should I do about my depression?
You can work together with your doctor to find the right treatment for you. Most people get better with a combination of the following treatments. Always tell your doctor what works and what doesn’t.

Medications
In the last 40 years, many excellent medications have been developed for depression. Your primary care doctor or psychiatrist can find the right one for you. Medications may take four to six weeks to work. Some people try several medications before they find the right one.

Counseling or Talk Therapy
Your doctor may suggest you go for counseling. There are many kinds of therapy that work for depression. Some people feel better with short-term treatment. Other people choose to be in therapy longer. Group therapy can be helpful.

Many people with depression have found cognitive behavioral therapies help them live the most. This kind of therapy helps you change how you view things. You learn how to have more positive thoughts.

Steps you can take
• Break large tasks into small ones. Decide what is most important and what you can wait. Take little steps to feel better. It can help just to get up at a certain time each day or do one chore around the house each day.
• Make plans to be with other people. Sometimes being with others can help lift your spirits. Consider joining a church, synagogue, mosque, or club. Get out of your house every day.
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Taking medication for depression
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• Feeling empty or numb
• Having thoughts of death or suicide

Can depression run in the family?
Yes. Some families may have a genetic predisposition that makes more family members vulnerable to depression. If you know that a close family member had depression, it’s possible that you too may be at risk. However, you can get depression even if no one else in your family has the illness.

Is depression really that serious?
Yes. Without treatment, up to 15% of those with depression will commit suicide. Many others face broken relationships, cannot work, or start to use alcohol or drugs.

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Taking medication for depression
Medications for Depression
What You Should Know About
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Many doctors suggest medications for people with depression. The following suggestions can help you make your medication work better.

Before you take your medication:
Be sure to tell your doctor about:
• Other prescription drugs you take.
• Herbs and vitamins you use regularly.
• “Street” drugs you may take, or
• Alcohol you drink.

All of these things can change the way your medication works.

When to take medication:
Be sure to follow the directions on your prescription. It is best to take your medication every day around the same time if possible. If you forget a day, don’t double the dose the next day. Take your regular dose at your regular time. Remember, medication works best if you take it every day.

Why don’t some people with depression receive treatment?
• They don’t realize that they have a treatable illness.
• They are too embarrassed to seek help.
• They feel they should be strong enough to get better without help.
• They feel too tired or sad.
• They do not know where to go for help.

What did your doctor tell you about your medication?
• It’s important to remember to take your medication as directed.
• Your doctor may change your dosage if you do not feel better or if you experience side effects.
• Always take your medication as directed by your doctor.

How to take your medication:
1. Take every day.
2. Continue to take your medication even if you feel better.
3. Do not stop taking your medication without first talking to your doctor.

What should you do if you forget to take your medication?
• Take as soon as you remember, but don’t take a double dose.
• Continue with your usual routine.

Why should you take your medication?
• It’s the most important step you can take to feel better.
• It can help you manage your symptoms.
• It can help you feel better faster.
• It can help protect you from future episodes of depression.

What should you know about your medication?
• What are the possible side effects?
• What should you do if you experience side effects?
• What are the possible interactions with other medications, alcohol, or other substances?
• What should you do if you notice any unusual symptoms?

What to expect from your medication:
• You may feel better within a few days.
• You may feel better within a few weeks.
• You may feel better within a few months.

What to expect from your doctor:
• They will monitor your progress and adjust your treatment as needed.
• They will listen to your concerns and answer your questions.

What to expect from your support system:
• They will provide encouragement and support.
• They will listen to your feelings and concerns.

What to expect from yourself:
• You will need to take responsibility for your treatment.
• You will need to be patient and persistent.

What is treatment like?
• You may feel tired or sluggish.
• You may have difficulty concentrating.
• You may have difficulty making decisions.
• You may have difficulty sleeping.
• You may have difficulty eating.
• You may have difficulty completing tasks.

What to expect from family and friends:
• They will provide support and encouragement.
• They will help you stay motivated.
• They will help you stay connected.

What to expect from your workplace:
• They will understand that you may need time off.
• They will provide accommodations.
• They will provide support.

What to expect from your school:
• They will provide accommodations.
• They will provide support.

What to expect from your health care provider:
• They will provide a diagnosis.
• They will provide treatment options.
• They will provide support.

What to expect from your medication:
• It will help you feel better.
• It will help you manage your symptoms.
• It will help you feel better faster.
• It will help protect you from future episodes of depression.

The end of depression is near.
Your doctor and your medication will help you feel better.

What should you know about your medication?
• What is the name of your medication?
• What is the dosage?
• What are the possible side effects?
• What should you do if you experience side effects?
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Common questions about depression

Can’t people just “snap out of it”?

No. You don’t expect someone with asthma to snap out of it if someone with diabetes just to get over it. Depression is also a medical illness. Instead of affecting the heart or lungs, depression affects chemicals in the brain.

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Treating Depression

What can I do about my depression?

You can work together with your doctor to find the right treatment for you. Most people get better with a combination of the following treatments. Always tell your doctor what works and what doesn’t.

What if my depression doesn’t get better?

Many people with depression have found cognitive behavioral therapies help them the most. This kind of therapy helps you change how you think. You learn how to have more positive thoughts.

Helping yourself

It’s hard to make changes if you feel exhausted, helpless, and hopeless. You may feel like giving up. However, when people with depression get better, these feelings go away.

Steps you can take:

• Break large tasks into small ones. Decide what is most important and what can wait.
• Take little steps to feel better. It can help just to get up at a certain time each day or doing one chore around the house each day.
• Make plans to be with other people. Sometimes being with others can help lift your spirits. Consider joining a church, synagogue, mosque, or club. Get out of your house every day.
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Remember, there is hope! People with depression can get better with treatment, medication, and support.

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