

## Tips for Managing Depression with Self-Care

Depression is a common medical condition that can include feelings of sadness and hopelessness. This condition is more difficult to overcome than the unhappiness that you may feel from normal disappointments, such as losing someone or something important to you. The good news is that there are many different treatment choices that can help you start feeling better soon.

Common symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or “down” most of the time
- Little or no pleasure or interest in things you used to enjoy
- Changes in appetite or weight (that you didn’t consciously choose to change)
- Changes in sleep (sleeping more or less than usual)
- Frequent or long-lasting periods of feeling tired or low energy
- Feelings of low self-esteem, self-criticism, or frequent guilt
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering things, or making decisions

If these symptoms continue for more than 2 weeks, and are not due to a medical condition or a major life change causing severe emotional stress, you may be experiencing depression. Speak to or visit your doctor to determine if depression is the cause. He/she can help identify the treatment choices best for you.

### Is there anything I can do to help myself?

Although depression isn’t something you can just “shake off” there are things you can do weekly or daily that can help. If these don’t seem to make a difference after a few weeks, check with your health care provider for treatment choices that are right for you.

- **Get physical!** Being physically active several times a week can help improve feelings of depression. It helps your brain produce natural chemicals that increase good feelings, improve sleep, and support overall wellness.
- **Choose healthy foods and beverages.** Several servings of fresh vegetables and fruits daily and small amounts of low-fat protein (fish, poultry, nuts, beans, dairy, soy products) can help you feel good. Avoid high-sugar snacks, fast food, processed or packaged foods and soft drinks, which can drain your energy and mood.
- **Unplug and relax.** Practice daily relaxation for at least 10 minutes a day. Things like listening to soothing music, closing your eyes and breathing deeply and slowly, listening to a recorded relaxation practice, stretching gently, or anything you find relaxing and uplifting can lighten your mood.
- **Reconnect with pleasure.** Make a date with yourself (or maybe a close relative or friend) to do something you remember you enjoyed in the past but haven’t “scheduled” for awhile.
- **Reach out to others.** Feeling isolated and/or lonely is common with depression so fight back by calling, emailing, or getting together with someone who makes you feel good.
- **Have a daily routine for self-care.** Prepare yourself to greet the day in a way that makes you feel good. Taking a shower or bath, styling your hair, eating regular meals, taking rest breaks from work and pacing yourself so you don’t get overwhelmed are important kinds of self-care that make a difference in how you feel.

## Resources

Hill Physicians online health center provides access to depression health information including self-care topics, a guide to behavioral health professionals, interactive tools, and resources to help you take charge of your health and well-being. Learn more at [www.HillPhysicians.com/YourHealth](http://www.HillPhysicians.com/YourHealth).

## Relaxation Podcasts

Discover relaxation as you engage your mind, body, and spirit in gentle, but powerful guided visualizations to reduce stress and encourage deep relaxation. Hill Physicians podcasts are available to download in a variety of formats at [www.hillphysicians.com/podcasts](http://www.hillphysicians.com/podcasts).

See a complete list of resources at [www.HillPhysicians.com](http://www.HillPhysicians.com). You may also find information at:

***American Psychiatric Association (APA)***

888-357-7924

[www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)

***Depressive and Bipolar Support Alliance (National Depressive & Manic Depressive Assoc.)***

800-826-3632

[www.dbsalliance.org](http://www.dbsalliance.org)

***National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)***

800-950-6264

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

***National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)***

Voice: 800-647-2642

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

***National Mental Health Association (NMHA)***

800-969-6642

[www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

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