

Patient Information about Depression

<http://www.mentalhealthchannel.net/patient-information-depression/index.shtml>

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), depression and depressive disorders affect more than 20 million people each year in the United States and incidence of these mental health conditions increases each year. Types of depressive disorders include major depressive disorder (also called major depression), dysthymic disorder (also called dysthymia), seasonal affective disorder (SAD), and postpartum depression.

Depression is a mood disorder that may be related to other mental health disorders, such as anxiety, or to chronic medical conditions, such as thyroid disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's disease, and cerebral palsy. Depression symptoms vary in severity and often have a serious impact on daily life. Causes of depression are thought to be a combination of brain chemistry, genetic factors (heredity), and environmental factors.

Here are some questions to ask your doctor or mental health provider about depression and depression treatment. **Print this page**, check off the questions you would like answered, and take it with you to your appointment. The more knowledge you have about depressive disorders, the easier it will be to develop a successful treatment plan.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Depression

- Why do you think I have a depressive disorder?
- What form of depressive disorder do you think I have?
- What are the symptoms associated with this disorder?
- Might there be another cause for my depression symptoms, such as medication or a medical condition?
- Are there any other illnesses that often coexist with this type of depressive disorder?
- If so, how might these illnesses be diagnosed and treated?
- Do you recommend that I see a mental health specialist to diagnose or treat my depression? Why or why not?
- How will my condition be diagnosed? What will the diagnostic evaluation involve?
- What types of laboratory tests will be performed?

- What factors do you think may have contributed to my depression?
- Might this type of depression be hereditary or related to environmental factors? If so, are other members of my family at increased risk for developing a depressive disorder?
- How do men and women experience depression differently?
- How is depression experienced in children and adolescents? How does the condition usually manifest in the elderly?
- What type of depression treatment(s) do you recommend?
- What are the benefits, risks, and possible complications associated with these treatments?
- How can I help myself feel better during treatment for depression?
- About how long do you expect it to take for my condition to respond to treatment?
- Do you recommend medications to treat my depression? Why or why not?
- If so, what type of medication will you prescribe?
- How should I take this medication?
- How long will I need to take this medicine?
- Does this medication interact with other medicines or with foods? If so, which other medications and foods must I avoid during treatment?
- What are the common side effects associated with this medication?
- What types of severe side effects may occur?
- What should I do if my condition worsens or I experience severe medication side effects?
Telephone number to call:
- Does this medication carry a risk for dependency?

- Are there any other potential dangers associated with this medication?
- What should I do if I experience thoughts of suicide while taking this medication?
Telephone number to call:
- Might discontinuing this drug abruptly cause severe withdrawal symptoms? If so, how should I stop taking it?
- If my depression symptoms do not improve or return after treatment, what other therapies or medications may be prescribed?
- Do you recommend psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and/or interpersonal therapy to treat my depression? If so, what do these treatments involve?
- How often will I have therapy and how long will each session be? How long do you think my therapy will last?
- If medication and psychotherapy are unsuccessful, what other types of treatment are available?
- What is electroconvulsive therapy? What does this treatment involve?
- Might electroconvulsive therapy be used to treat my depression? Why or why not?
- What new types of depression treatments are being studied?
- Do you recommend that I participate in a depression clinical trial? Why or why not?
- Do you recommend any complementary and alternative medicine treatments for my depression? Why or why not?
- If a friend or family member shows signs of depression, how can I help?
- Can you recommend any mental health support groups or other mental health resources?

Notes/Additional Information