



Managing Your Depression

No matter how depressed you are, treatment can help you feel better.

Depression is more than having the blues or feeling a little down. Depression is a serious medical condition that can affect your physical and emotional well-being.

If you've had 5 or more of the following symptoms nearly every day for more than 2 weeks, you may have clinical or more serious depression:

- Feeling sad, blue, tearful, hopeless, or down.
- Having little interest or pleasure in things you used to enjoy (including sex).
- Gaining or losing weight due to changes in appetite.
- Sleeping much more or less than usual.
- Feeling restless, irritable, or angry.
- Feeling tired or low energy.
- Feeling worthless, ashamed, or guilty.
- Having difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.
- Thinking about death or suicide.

Contact your doctor or Mental Health services about an assessment.

If you're thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital. Or call the Suicide Hotline at 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433).

Causes

Depression can have several causes, including:

- Changes in brain chemicals.
- Serious or chronic illnesses or medical conditions.
- Personal or family history of depression.
- Major life changes or losses (death of a loved one, work stress, retirement, divorce, or marital difficulties).
- Childhood trauma (adverse childhood experiences or ACEs), or current domestic violence or other trauma.
- Alcohol or drug use disorder.

Seniors and depression

Sometimes depression in seniors is missed or confused with other conditions, such as dementia. If you (or a senior you care about) have several depression symptoms, it's important to talk with your clinician or contact Mental Health Services about an assessment.

Self-care

If your depression is mild to moderate, self-care can help improve your mood. Here are tips to try.

Get moving. Physical activity and exercise are good for your mind and body. Adding them to your day will increase your energy and reduce stress. To get started, walk for about 10 minutes. Gradually add time so you get 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.

Find joy again. Think of what you enjoy doing and make sure you do it at least once a week. This could be listening to music, walking your dog, or spending time with friends. You may have to push yourself to get started. Enjoying yourself is healthy for your mind and body.

Reach out. Get back in touch with friends or family you care about. Isolating yourself can make depression worse.

Eat healthier. Switch to healthier foods, especially vegetables and fruits. Eating breakfast and other meals at regular times is important for maintaining your energy.

Avoid alcohol, drugs, and overuse of caffeine.

You may have tried drinking more coffee or alcohol to try to feel better. But this can make things worse and interfere with medications you're taking. Ask your clinician about support services to help you make healthier choices.

Look for positives. Remind yourself that taking steps to feel better is important for your well-being. Look for signs that your depression is lifting. For instance, you're doing activities you enjoy or connecting with friends.

What to do if self-care doesn't work

No matter how depressed you are, you can feel better. If your depression is more serious, you may need treatment, which generally includes antidepressant medication and counseling.

You can contact Mental Health Services at your local medical center directly, without a doctor's referral.

Be sure to talk to your doctor or Mental Health Services if:

- You've used self-care for 2 weeks, but your mood hasn't improved.
- You have 5 or more symptoms of depression nearly every day for 2 weeks or more.

We're here to help

- Mental health wellness resources
kpdoc.org/wellnesscoaching

- Depression Care Guide:
Am I depressed?
kpdoc.org/amidepressed

Community resources

- National Alliance on Mental Illness
nami.org
- Helping Someone with a Mood Disorder
dbsalliance.org



This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.

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90224-000 (Revised 10/23) RL 6.8