



Understanding Depression

Depression is a common medical condition that affects how people of all ages think, feel and behave. There are many possible causes for depression, including a personal or family history of mood disorders; a pre-existing condition, such as anxiety or cancer; or a specific event or stressor that can trigger depression-like symptoms. Recognizing these symptoms and going to your doctor for help is an important step toward managing your depression.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION MAY INCLUDE:

- A persistent, sad mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in most activities/ social avoidance
- Change in appetite or weight, either increased or decreased
- Change in sleep pattern – too much, too little or interrupted
- Concentration/memory/decision-making problems
- Decreased activity that is noticeable to others/low energy
- Apathy, irritability, anxiety
- Feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Sexual complaints
- Vague gastrointestinal symptoms
- Headaches
- Repeated thoughts of death or suicide
- **Tell your doctor immediately if you are thinking of harming yourself or someone else (See Crisis Options below)**

DEPRESSION OFTEN CO-EXISTS WITH OTHER CONDITIONS:

- Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse
- Anxiety
- Cancer
- Catastrophic Illness
- Chronic Medical/Psychiatric Conditions
- Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- Obesity/Eating Disorders
- Marital or Relationship Problems/Domestic Violence
- Pregnancy/Postpartum
- Thyroid Disorders

Depression can and should be treated when it occurs in these cases. If left untreated, depression can delay recovery from, or worsen the outcome of, other illnesses.

CRISIS OPTIONS FOR DEPRESSION:

- Go to the closest hospital emergency room
- Call 911
- Call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 for suspected overdose
- Call the national or local crisis hotline

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

- Statewide: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- TTY line: 1-800-799-4889

Callers will automatically be directed to their specific county's crisis line by the zip code from which they are calling.

CRISIS HOTLINES BY COUNTY:

- Allegany: (585) 593-5706
- Cattaraugus: 1-800-339-5209
- Chautauqua: 1-800-724-0461
- Erie: (716) 834-3131
- Children and Adolescents Hotline: (716) 834-1144; 1-877-KIDS-400
- Genesee/Orleans: (585) 343-1212; 1-800-359-5727
- Niagara: (716) 285-3515
- Wyoming: 1-800-724-8583

NYS Domestic and Sexual Violence 24-Hour Hotline:

- 1-800-942-6906 (English) • 1-800-942-6908 (Spanish)

NON-CRISIS TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR DEPRESSION BY A PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN:

- Depression screening/questionnaire: Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and Scoring Tool are attached to this guideline. If you score positive upon completing the PHQ-9, Independent Health recommends you consult your doctor.
- Initial evaluation of depression severity
- Rule out medical disorders and alcohol/drug/prescription abuse
- Refer to mental health specialist and coordinate care
- Select and start antidepressant medication treatment
- Provide education about depression
- Monitor patient response to and side effects of medication
- On-going evaluation for depression symptom relief, medication changes, other biological therapies, add or modify psychotherapy and referral to psychiatrist specialist
- On-going evaluation of patient adherence to treatment plan

Only a doctor can determine if your symptoms are caused by depression or another condition.

DEPRESSION TREATMENT MAY INCLUDE:

- Antidepressant medication: may take four to six weeks for full effect
- Continued antidepressant medication once remission is obtained for minimum of nine months, longer depending upon depression history
- Counseling or “talk therapy” on a regular basis
- Combination therapy including medication and counseling
- Self-help activity: contact the National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.namainys.org) or the Mental Health Association (www.mhanys.org)

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

- Exercise and lifestyle changes help many people feel less depressed
- Keep in touch with family and friends
- Participate in activities that help you feel connected
- Do something you enjoy every day
- Some people find happiness and strength from religion and prayer

HOW INDEPENDENT HEALTH CAN HELP:

- Call the Independent Health 24-Hour Medical Help Line* at **1-800-501-3439** and ask to speak with a health coach

*Independent Health’s 24-Hour Medical Help Line should not be used for diagnosis or as a substitute for a physician.

PATIENT HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE (PHQ 9)

The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) is a powerful tool for assisting primary care clinicians in diagnosing depression as well as selecting and monitoring treatment. Results of this questionnaire should be discussed with your doctor.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?
(use "✓" to indicate your answer)

| | NOT AT ALL | SEVERAL DAYS | MORE THAN HALF THE DAYS | NEARLY EVERY DAY |
|---|------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things | 0 | | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless | 0 | | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much | 0 | | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Feeling tired or having little energy | 0 | | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Poor appetite or overeating | 0 | | 2 | 3 |
| 6. Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down | 0 | | 2 | 3 |
| 7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television | 0 | | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite – being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual | 0 | | 2 | 3 |
| 9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself in some way* | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

ADD COLUMNS:

+

+

TOTAL:

See reverse for Scoring Instructions.

*** If you checked off Question #9 with a 1, 2 or 3, call your doctor or clinician immediately to discuss further.**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

PHQ-9 QUICK DEPRESSION ASSESSMENT

Scoring – add up all checked boxes on PHQ-9

For every ✓: Not at all = 0; Several days = 1; More than half the days = 2; Nearly every day = 3

Interpretation of Total Score

| Total Score | Depression Severity |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| 0-4 | None |
| 5-9 | Mild depression |
| 10-14 | Moderate depression |
| 15-19 | Moderately severe depression |
| 20-27 | Severe depression |

The PHQ-9 is for guidance only and not a definitive diagnostic instrument.

Results should be discussed with your doctor or other clinician to determine best course of action.