

# Mental Disorders in Primary Care

## Depression

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### Common symptoms

#### Mood and Motivation

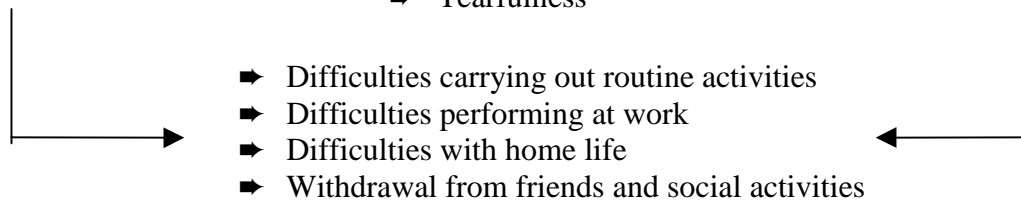
- Continuous low mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Hopelessness
- Helplessness
- Worthlessness

#### Psychological

- Guilt / negative attitude to self
- Poor concentration/memory
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Tearfulness

#### Physical

- Slowing down or agitation
- Tiredness / lack of energy
- Sleep problems
- Disturbed appetite (weight loss/increase)



### Depression is common and treatable

- Depression does not mean weakness
- Depression does not mean laziness
- Depression does mean that you have a medical disorder which requires treatment

### Common triggers

#### Psychological

- Major life events
- recent bereavement
- relationship problems
- unemployment
- moving house
- stress at work
- financial problems

#### Other

- family history of depression
- childbirth
- menopause
- seasonal changes

#### Illness

- infectious diseases
- influenza hepatitis
- chronic medical conditions
- alcohol and substance use disorders

#### Medications

- antihypertensives
- H2 blockers
- oral contraceptives
- corticosteroids

### What treatments can help?

**Both therapies are often needed**

#### Supportive therapy for:

- stress/life problems
- patterns of negative thinking
- prevention of further episodes

#### Medication for:

- depressed mood or loss of interest / pleasure for two or more weeks and at least four of the symptoms mentioned earlier
- little response to supportive therapy (counselling)
- recurrent depression
- family history of depression

## About medication

### Effective

works better and faster than other methods

### Treatment plan

must be strictly adhered to

### Drugs

- are not addictive
- interact in a harmful way with alcohol
- improvement takes time, generally 2-4 weeks for response

### Side effects

must be reported, but generally start improving within 7-10 days

### Progress

- same medication should continue unless a different decision is made by the physician
- medication should not be discontinued without physician's knowledge
- in case a medication is not effective, another medication may be tried

### Time period

medication to be continued at least 6 months after initial improvement

### Ongoing review

is necessary over the next few months

## Increasing time spent on enjoyable activities

- Set small achievable, daily goals for doing pleasant activities
- Plan time for activities and increase the amount of time spent on these each week
- Plan things to look forward to in the future
- Keep busy even when it is hard to feel motivated
- Try to be with other people/family members

## Problem solving plan

### Discuss

problems with partner/family members, trusted friend or counsellor

### Distance

yourself to look at problems as though you were an observer

### Options

to work out possible solutions to solve the problems

### Pros & cons

examine advantages and disadvantages of each option

### Time frame

to examine and resolve problems

### Action plan

for working through the problems over a period of time

### Review

progress made in solving problems

## Changing attitudes and way of thinking

“I will always feel this way things will never change”

### Replace with

“These feelings are temporary. With treatment things will look better in a few weeks”

“It's all my fault. I do not seem to be able to do anything right”

### Replace with

“These are negative thoughts that are the result of depression. What evidence for this do I really have?”



# **Depression**

**Depression is an illness - it is common and treatable**

# Depression

## Depression is an illness - it is common and treatable

Depression *does not* mean that you are weak or lazy. It is a *medical* disorder like hypertension, diabetes or arthritis that requires *medical treatment*. It can occur at any age and can be overcome with *medical help*.

## What is depression?

Many people use the word depression to describe feelings of sadness and loss. These feelings often pass within a few hours or a few days. During this time people are able to carry out their normal activities. The medical illness called *depression* is different from transient feelings of sadness. In *depression*, as a medical disorder, sad feelings are felt much more intensely and for a longer period of time. It can be disruptive to your work, social and family life.

Depression can also affect people in many other ways. Common symptoms are:

- Disturbed sleep
- Changes to appetite
- Physical aches and pain
- Lack of energy or motivation
- Irritability and intolerance
- Feelings of guilt
- Loss of concentration

## What may trigger depression?

It is known that there are biochemical changes in the brains of depressed patients. There is also evidence that if your first degree relatives suffer from depression, you are at a greater risk of having depression. For many people, depression is triggered by stressful events, alcohol or drug use. However, in some people there is no obvious trigger. Think about your situation - was your depression associated with one of the triggers listed below?

If so, put a check beside it. If not, and you are aware of some other trigger, write it in the space provided. It would help to discuss this with your doctor, your family and friends.

### Possible triggers

- |   |       |  |       |
|---|-------|--|-------|
| ➤ Moving house  | _____ | ➤ Loss of job  | _____ |
| ➤ Divorce or separation                                   | _____ | ➤ Poverty  | _____ |
| ➤ Death of a loved one                                    | _____ | ➤ Unemployment   | _____ |
| ➤ Long term alcohol use                                   | _____ | ➤ Chronic drug use                                     | _____ |
| ➤ Certain medications                                     | _____ | ➤ Seasonal changes                                     | _____ |
| ➤ Dissatisfaction or conflict at work                     | _____ | ➤ Loneliness   | _____ |
| ➤ Death of a spouse                                       | _____ | ➤ Marital problems                                     | _____ |
| ➤ Chronic physical illness                                | _____ | ➤ Childbirth   | _____ |
| ➤ Being a victim of a crime or an accident                | _____ | ➤ Unsatisfactory relationships with family or friends  | _____ |
| ➤ Serious injury or illness in the patient or a loved one | _____ | ➤ Unprepared social and cultural changes (immigration) | _____ |
| ➤ Low self-esteem   | _____ | ➤ Others (specify)                                     | _____ |

# How to overcome depression

## 1 Identify your symptoms of depression - in the last month

<i>Symptom Severity Form</i>	Not at all	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Feelings of sadness	_____	_____	_____	_____
Loss of interest or pleasure in activities previously enjoyed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lack of energy / tiredness	_____	_____	_____	_____
Poor/disturbed sleep	_____	_____	_____	_____
Putting on/losing weight	_____	_____	_____	_____
Poor concentration / forgetfulness	_____	_____	_____	_____
Slowness	_____	_____	_____	_____
Restlessness	_____	_____	_____	_____
Decreased interest in sex	_____	_____	_____	_____
Physical aches/pains	_____	_____	_____	_____
Believing that you are no good	_____	_____	_____	_____
Feelings of hopelessness	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thoughts of harming oneself	_____	_____	_____	_____
Feelings of guilt/self blame	_____	_____	_____	_____

## 2 Identify problems in your life

Everybody experiences problems in life and sometimes these can trigger depression. List the problems which you think triggered your depression. What were the things that bothered you before you became depressed?

e.g. *Going through divorce, unhappy work environment*

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Discuss your list with your doctor and/or counsellor, family member or a trusted friend.

## 3 Working out a strategy to deal with problems

Often problems that never get resolved can trigger depression. Are you putting your problems off because you cannot find any easy solutions to them? Maybe with the help of your doctor and/or your counsellor and the support of your family and friends you can try to work out some of your problems. Think of the problems you have listed previously. We suggest that you work through each of them using the following strategy.

*Discuss the problem(s) with a trusted family member or friend.*

*Then write down what you believe to be the major difficulties of solving it.*

*e.g. Problem: Unhappy work environment*

*Major difficulty of solving it: Difficulty finding a new job*

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Work out options for dealing with the problem(s)

Then write down your options

e.g. *Leave the job and then look for a new one*      *You shouldn't leave your job*

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What do other people think?

*before finding a new job*

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Decide on a step by step action plan for working through the problem(s). The final solution can seem over-whelming. Plan the steps that you need to take to solve the problem and then set realistic time targets to achieve each step.

**Action**

**Date**

e.g. *Start looking for a new job*

*Tomorrow*

**Examine** the progress made in solving the problem(s). At each step, review your progress and discuss this with your doctor and/or counselor or with a trusted family member or friend.

**Progress review**

**Date**

e.g. *Boss responded positively*

*6/6/97*

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#### 4 Identify routine and pleasant activities

Think about your daily routine activities before you were depressed and write them below. Now think about those activities that you enjoyed and those that you would have liked to have done and also write them down,

Before becoming depressed

*My routine activities*

*Pleasant activities*

*Activities I wanted to do*

e.g. *Grocery shopping*

*Going to a restaurant*

*Reading*

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#### 5 Increase routine and pleasant activities

Once you have identified your daily routine activities and pleasant activities with the help of your doctor and/ or counsellor you can slowly try to return to your routine and also try to do some of the pleasant activities you enjoy. At the beginning of each week you can choose activities from your "daily routine" list and "pleasant activity" list and build them into your day.

**Remember, it is Important to do these activities even when you do not feel like it**

#### 6 Identify those areas of your life that are positive

When you are depressed it is easy to lose sight of those things that you value in your life. Think about life before depression. What did you value and what was special? Make a list of them.

e.g. *Family*      .....  
*Children*      .....  
*Work*      .....  
*Sport*      .....  
*Music*      .....

Having identified those areas of your life that are positive, discuss them with your doctor and/or counsellor.

## 7 Identity negative thinking

When people are depressed they tend to think negatively about themselves, events and their future. Negative thinking can also trigger depression and slow down recovery. Have you noticed differences in the way people think about events? Some people are mostly positive while others are negative. Can you relate to any of the examples below?

*A colleague was promoted at work rather than you...*

### Person A

She is more experienced  
She has been here longer  
She has the necessary skills  
It will be my turn next time

### Person B

I will never get promoted  
I am not appreciated  
I am not liked  
I am worthless

*Brief disappointment*

*Prolonged unhappiness*

***Remember you can help the success of your treatment by working to change your negative way of thinking.***

Here are some more examples of negative thoughts or beliefs. Mark the statements that apply to you

- If someone does not like me it means that there is something wrong with me
- If I get criticised it means that I am wrong
- If I make a mistake that means that I am stupid
- Things always and will always go wrong for me
- I cannot handle it when things go wrong
- To be a good person I have to be nice to everyone
- If I am a bad person if I hurt someone
- If I show emotion it means that I am weak
- If my partner leaves me it means that I am worthless
- If I do not get asked out it means that I am not liked
- I can never overcome my problems
- If the relationships failed, I did something wrong

## 8 How do you change the way that you think

It is likely that you have been thinking in a negative way for sometime now. It will take a lot of practice to change these ways

***Remember you can learn to think more positively and this will make a huge difference in your life.***

Here are some suggestions:

***First***, ask yourself “*is what I believe TRUE?*”

- It will be useful to consult someone outside the situation for their opinion
- Ask yourself if everyone would have the same belief in this situation
- Examine other possible explanations for the event occurring

***Second***, counter each negative and unreasonable thought with more realistic ones

- This should be opposite to the unreasonable belief
- It should be a realistic statement
- There should be as many counters as possible

**Now**, read the following example and work out your own examples using the same format. You can do this with the help of your doctor and/or your counsellor.

**Example**

The example below shows how negative and positive thoughts lead to different reactions to the same situation.

*SITUATION:* Was not chosen for job

**Unreasonable/negative thoughts:**

- Just as well I didn't get the job, I would have failed at it anyway
- I am no good/stupid
- I am a failure
- I should give up
- I will never succeed

**Resulting feelings:** Worthlessness, depression.

Now let's look at the same situation from a different angle

Reasonable/positive thoughts:

- Many people do not get the job they want
- I need to practice some interview techniques
- I am not a failure, I have achieved many good things in the past
- I will not get anywhere by giving up
- If I persevere I can succeed
- I have succeeded in the past and I will continue to succeed

**Resulting feelings:** Disappointment, but enthusiasm and hope

Now you can work through your own examples. Write down a situation that has made you unhappy and any negative thoughts you may have had and the resulting feelings. Next you may write the counter positive thoughts and the new resulting feelings.

**Remember it will take time to change the way you think and feel**

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# Keep a record of your progress

As part of treatment it is often useful to record how you feel and also to plan and record activities that you do. This will help you keep track of your progress.

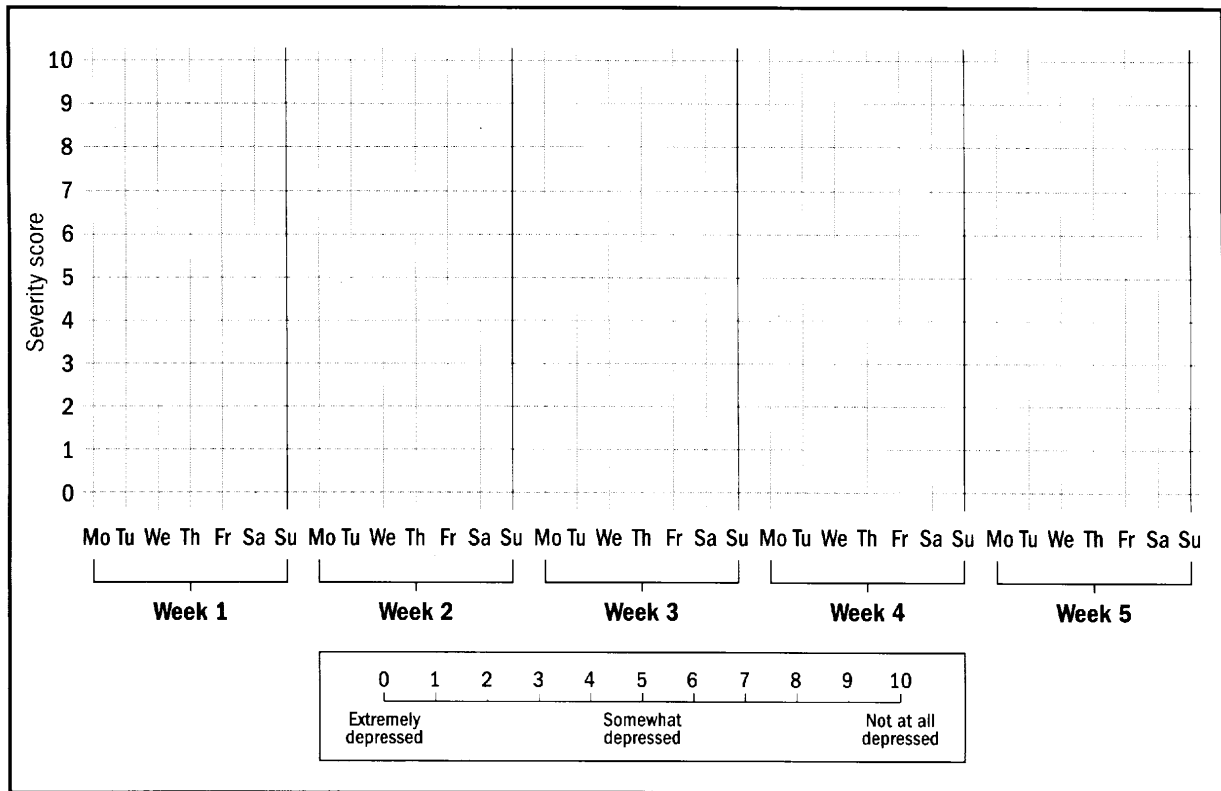
Use the Symptom Severity Form and Personal Progress Chart to monitor your mood and symptoms. Give yourself an overall rating of how you feel each wee~

**Remember to:**

- 1 Choose items from your activity lists and build them into each day using the weekly activity planning form
- 2 Every week think about how you feel and rate each of your symptoms on the symptom severity form
- 3 Each week mark your overall depression rating on the personal progress chart

## Overall rating of how you feel

**Personal Progress Chart**



## **How to avoid recurrence of depression**

- it is very important that you follow your physicians advice
- take your medication as directed without skipping any days
- never reduce or stop taking medication without first talking to your doctor
- identify your negative thinking habit and change them to positive one

**Assess your symptoms regularly and consult your physician and/or counselor if you have any problem.**

## **Finally**

- Doing the exercises when you are depressed can be difficult
- It might be useful to work through them with a trusted friend or family member.
- If you need extra help you can always talk to your doctor and/or your counsellor.

**You can overcome your depression.**

This page will be filled by local centers or attending PCPs

**Notes**

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Medication information

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Self-help groups

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Counselors

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Doctors

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Help lines

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Suggested reading

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Other materials

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## ICD-10 PC: Questionnaire for

# Depressive Disorder

During the *last month* have you had any of the following complaints most of the time for at least two weeks. If yes, please check or mark the relevant box.

- I. Have you been feeling sad, blue or depressed?
- II. Have you lost interest or pleasure in things that you enjoyed previously?
- III. Have you been feeling your energy decreased and/or you are tired all the time?

### If YES to any of the above, continue below

1. Have you been experiencing any problems falling asleep or waking up much earlier than before?
2. Have you lost your appetite or have you been eating much more than usual?
3. Any difficulties concentrating; for example, listening to others, working, watching TV, listening to the radio ?
4. Have you noticed any slowing down in your thinking or moving around?
5. Has your interest in sex decreased?
6. Have you felt negative about yourself or lost confidence ?
7. Have you thought of death, wished that you were dead or tried to end your life?
8. Do you often feel guilty?

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### I. During *the last month* have you been limited in one or more of the following areas most of the time:

- Self care: bathing, dressing, eating?
- Family relations: spouse, children, relatives?
- Going to work or school?
- Doing housework or household tasks?
- Social activities, seeing friends, hobbies?
- Remembering things?

### II. Because of these problems doing the *last month*:

How many days were you unable to fully carry out your usual daily activities? \_\_\_\_\_

How many days did you spend in bed in order to rest? \_\_\_\_\_