
THE WELLNESS LETTER

Depression

Making the Most of Treatment

Treatment of depression takes time. During the first weeks or months of treatment you may think that you will never feel better. It is important to be patient. There are things you can do to improve your chances of getting better. It helps to learn about your medication treatment. You should also understand the process of therapy. There are things that you can do outside of these treatments that can help speed up your recovery from depression and prevent a relapse.

Understanding Medication Treatment

What are antidepressants and how do they work?

Many different chemicals carry messages between the cells in a your brain. Depression is caused by low amounts of some of these chemicals in certain brain areas. Antidepressant medications increase the amounts of specific chemicals. There are different ways of doing this. This is why there are many different types of antidepressant medication. Two anti-depressants may affect the same chemical but act on it in different ways. Other antidepressants may act on different chemicals.

What symptoms do antidepressants help?

Antidepressants can help reduce anxiety, feelings of guilt and hopelessness, and sad moods. They can increase your energy and make it easier to concentrate. Antidepressants can increase enjoyment of activities, and can increase sex drive. They can help sleeping and eating problems. They can help stop thoughts of death or suicide. Antidepressant medications are not habit-forming. Antidepressant medications can help you feel better by reducing your symptoms. However, antide-

pressants do not solve life problems that may have caused - or contributed to - your depression. People can become depressed because of problems in their life. These include family or relationship problems, the loss of a loved one, stress at work, financial trouble, or serious medical problems. Therapy can help you to become aware of the thoughts and behaviors that may have caused your depression.

Common side effects of antidepressant medications.

Antidepressants work best when you take them every day exactly as your doctor prescribes. The information you give your doctor before he or she prescribes medication is very important. What you tell your doctor after you start taking the medication is also very important. This information will help your doctor treat your depression as effectively and safely as possible. It is common to have short-term side effects from antidepressant medications. Possible side effects include:

Nervousness	Insomnia
Blurred Vision	Constipation
Sweating	Dizziness
Dry mouth	Headache
Agitation	Nausea
Sleepiness	Loss of Sexual Desire
Tremors	Delayed orgasm
Weight gain	Trouble urinating

Only a few people have side effects that are bad enough to need a change in medication. Many of the side effects occur only at the beginning of treatment. Dry mouth, sleepiness, and sexual problems are the most common side effects. Many side effects disappear 2-6 weeks into treatment.

Talking with your doctor can make a difference.

The side effects you may get depend on the medicine you are taking and the way your body reacts to medications. Other medical conditions or taking other medicines can also have an effect. Tell your doctor about all your side effects, especially if the side effects are bad. Do not make changes in your medicine without talking to your doctor. This can be dangerous. Making changes can also keep your medicine from working.

If side effects are a problem, you and your doctor can make several changes. For example, one single dose of medicine may work better for some people than several smaller doses.

Sometimes a second medicine can be added to reduce side effects from the antidepressant medication. Changing your medication is a complicated decision. You and your doctor should make that decision together.

Keeping your primary care doctor informed

Whenever you are getting treatment from more than one health care provider it's important that they be able to talk to one another. It's a very good idea to sign a consent to release information. This will allow your psychiatrist or behavioral health therapist talk to your primary care doctor.

Success in Therapy

Talking therapy is not a magical cure. You must make a commitment to it. You must actively participate in it. Many people do not know what is expected of them in therapy. In therapy you should be trying to talk about the problems that brought you into treatment.

Make a commitment to the therapy process.

For your therapy to be successful, you must make a commitment to working with your therapist. During your therapy time you should focus on problems related to your depression. This may mean talking about things which are difficult or painful to talk about. It is natural to not want to talk about painful things. But it is exactly these painful feelings that may be related to your depression. In between therapy sessions, it is important that you think about the topics that you talked about in therapy.

Attend appointments regularly.

Therapy cannot happen if you do not keep your appointments.

Concentrate on the therapy, before and after each session.

Make some time each day to think about the things that you talked about in the last therapy session. You can also think about things that you would like to talk about in the next therapy session.

Record your thoughts during the week.

Write down the thoughts and feelings you have. In any type of therapy, keeping a record can help you and your therapist identify the thoughts and feelings that may be leading to your depression.

Do any homework that your therapist assigns.

Sometimes homework assignments may seem unimportant or not worth the effort. But doing your homework assignments is important. Homework can help to give your life structure.

Communicate with your therapist.

The most important thing in your therapy sessions is being able to talk with your therapist. A lot of people do not realize how important their relationship with their therapist is. Studies show that a good therapy relationship often leads to a successful treatment.

Use the symptom descriptions in the previous newsletter.

Using these terms will help you to describe any changes in your condition. Using these terms will also help your therapist better understand how you are feeling.

Share your thoughts, feelings, and actions with your therapist.

To understand your depression, your therapist must get to know you. Only then can your therapist decide the best way to treat your depression. Your therapist must learn what kinds of relationships you are involved in. Your therapist needs to know how you think and how you cope with problems. If you find yourself hiding information from your therapist, this may be a sign that you are uncomfortable.

If you are uncomfortable or unhappy with your therapy, talk with your therapist about it.

Feelings of depression can lead you to feel hopeless about your treatment. You may feel like you don't want to talk. Tell your therapist if you are uncomfortable with your treatment. Tell your therapist if you do not like your therapy. Telling your therapist these things can help both of you to understand why you feel this way. You and your therapist can then change the way you are being treated. If this new way of therapy does not work, you may think about looking for another therapist.

Your relationship with your therapist can be an example of a successful relationship.

Therapy involves two people. In this sense, it is a relationship. The problems you have in other relationships may come up in the relationship you have with your therapist. You and your therapist can use the feelings that come up in the therapy relationship to understand how you think and feel in other relationships.

Taking Care of Yourself - Part I

While medications and therapy sessions can have a large effect on your mood, there are many things that you can do to make yourself feel better and get the most out of your treatment. This includes making sure you take good care of yourself. Consider the following suggestions:

Take care of your health. Taking care of your basic health is important. When you are depressed, you increase your chances of becoming physically sick (like with a cold or the flu). When you become physically sick, you can become even more depressed.

Make sure you get enough sleep. Sleep during regular hours. It is important to set up a sleeping schedule. Try to go to sleep and wake up at about the same time each day.

Eat a well-balanced diet and eat at regular times during the day. People with depression may not feel like eating. If you do not eat, you will feel even worse. Set a schedule that includes a good diet and regular meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). This can help you to be physically healthy.

Exercise can help you focus your mind on something other than depressing thoughts. First, check with your doctor about the type of exercise that's best for you. Consider walking, jogging, aerobics, or other exercise. Set aside regular times for exercise. Studies show that people who exercise feel better about themselves.

Socialize. When you are depressed, it is often painful to try to talk or socialize with other people. At the same time, being around other people is important. Getting out of the house and being around other people can help you feel better.

Work at having close friendships. Friendships can help you feel better. They can help you feel supported. You do not need to talk to everyone, but it is important to have someone to talk with. Friends, family members, or your therapist are all good people to talk to.

Know and accept your limits. When you're depressed, talking with and being around other people may be difficult. Sometimes it can even make you feel worse. It is okay not to socialize a lot until you feel better. However, make sure to speak with family and friends so that they can understand your need for space.

Let close friends and family members know what you are going through. Letting people you trust know about your feelings of depression can help them help you to recover. Ask family members and friends to put less stress and fewer expectations on you for a while.

Accessing Your Behavioral Health Benefits

Please call the number on the back of your insurance card for questions about benefits, obtaining referrals to treatment, and other behavioral health issues.

In the Next Newsletter

In the next newsletter we will continue to talk about ways to take care of yourself that are important to your recovery. We will also discuss how to deal with medication treatment as you begin to feel better.

Contact Us

If you do not want to receive these newsletters, please call or write to us at the number or address listed below:

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