

Depression Fact Sheet

What you should know about starting treatment for depression

- Depression can affect anyone, at any time
- Depression may begin in response to stress, loss, or other difficult life events, or it may begin for what seems like no reason at all.
- Not all periods of sadness lead to depression or require treatment. Talk to your doctor about your problems to find out if you need treatment.
- Depression can be treated with medicine, with counseling, or with a combination of both medicine and counseling.

What you should know if your doctor prescribes antidepressant medicine

- Be sure you know the name of your medicine, the dose, when and how to take it. If you have questions, you should speak with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Sometimes antidepressant medicine does not work right away. Typically it takes 6 weeks for the medicine to be effective.
- If you don't start to feel better after 6 weeks, your doctor may prescribe another medicine.
- As with any medicines, there may be side effects. Many side effects are temporary and will get better on their own within a few weeks. Tell your doctor how you feel. Together you may be able to modify a dosage or choose another medicine.
- Be sure to schedule regular follow-up visits with your doctor. This is especially important during the first three months of treatment. Depression treatment should be carefully monitored.
- Sometimes individuals stop taking their medicines when they feel better. However, research indicates that individuals who stay on their antidepressant medicine for a period of at least six months prevent future episodes of depression. It is extremely important that you continue taking your medicine as prescribed. Discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor.

What you should know if your doctor refers you to a behavioral health specialist for counseling

- Your doctor may refer you to a behavioral health specialist. This specialist is a clinical social worker, psychologist, mental health counselor, marriage/family therapist, psychiatric nurse or psychiatrist who is specially trained to treat depression.
- For assistance with referrals under your Harvard Pilgrim coverage, to verify eligibility and benefits, and for more information on depression, call Optum Behavioral Health at (888) 777-4742 (HPHC).

Additional information on depression is available at

- National Institute of Mental Health, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>
- Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, <http://www.hphc.org>
- Optum Behavioral Health, <http://www.liveandworkwell.com>