

USING MEDICATIONS SUCCESSFULLY

The Cycle of Depression

People become depressed for many reasons. This booklet describes strategies for using medications successfully to alleviate symptoms of depression. Most often, depression is related to stressful life circumstances, such as marital problems, death of a loved one, loss of a job, or a child leaving home. Depression may also be related to physical problems such as chronic pain or medical illness.

Depression Occurs In Three Ways

The Body Feels Depressed

When the body is depressed, a person sleeps poorly, eats differently, has less energy, struggles with concentration, and has more aches and pains.

Behavior Is Depressed

When behavior is depressed, a person does much less than usual. She/he talks less, produces less, and socializes less.

The Mind Is Depressed

When the mind is depressed, thinking changes. A depressed person experiences more intensely negative and painful thoughts about the past and the future.

A person's body, behavior, and thoughts interact continuously. Once depression becomes a problem, this interaction may lead to a "downward spiral" in mood and hopefulness. Two courses of action help reverse the downward direction and create a "positive spiral."

1. Use of Medications

Medications may help some people with symptoms of depression feel better, but they work slowly and do not appear to prevent you from having future episodes of depression. Therefore, it is best to use medications in combination with behavioral planning and use of coping strategies. **If you decide to use medications and your doctor prescribes them, this booklet will help you use them well.**

2. Strategic Use of Coping Strategies

Use of active coping strategies helps you reverse the downward spiral of depression. When you address life problems with effective strategies, you have more opportunities to create positive conditions in your life context.

Make a concerted effort to work with your health care provider in planning medication treatment and skillful use of coping strategies. You will soon be feeling better.

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There are four important areas to attend to when considering the start of a medication, and this booklet will help you assess and prepare for success in each of these areas.

I. YOUR PAST EXPERIENCES WITH MEDICATIONS

Take a moment to recall your past experiences with use of medications for depression and anxiety.

Have you ever used a medicine to help alleviate symptoms of depression or anxiety?

Yes No

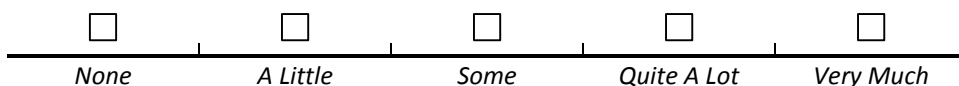
Try to recall the medication name, dosage, and length of treatment.

Name	Dose	When? How long?
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Also, recall any side effects you had with this medication. How much did they trouble you?

Side Effect	Bothered A Little	Bothered A Lot
<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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How much did you benefit from use of medication when you tried medication before?



This information will be helpful to you and your provider in making a decision about medication use and selection of a specific medication.

If you did have a limited response to medication treatment or experienced bothersome side effects in the past, you may still be a candidate for medication treatment. Your doctor may suggest that you try a new medication.

II. YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT MEDICATIONS

Your beliefs have a significant impact on your success in using antidepressant medications. Take stock of your beliefs right now. Mark an "X" by any of the following statements that you believe.

- I'll be the one to get terrible side effects.
- I can't afford these medicines.
- I'll never remember to take them.
- I'll get addicted.
- My family would not want me to use medications for this problem.
- These types of medications are overused.
- I should be able to get over my problems without taking medicine.

If you believe any of these statements, discuss the belief with your health care provider. She/he may be able to provide you with additional information to help you re-evaluate beliefs which might make medication use more difficult for you.

III. Your Knowledge about Medications

You are much more likely to succeed in antidepressant treatment when you have accurate information about all aspects of medication use. Please review the following details and discuss any questions you have with your health care providers.

Starting medication . . .

Start your medicine as soon as it is prescribed. The sooner you start, the sooner you will experience the desired benefits.

Remembering to take medicine . . .

Take your medicine at a certain time of day every day. During the first several weeks, you may want to leave yourself several reminder notes. Some people use a behavioral hygiene task, such as teeth brushing, as a cue to take their medication. Also, some people may want to leave an extra bottle of medication in a desk drawer at work in the event that they forget to take the medicine at home.

Deciding how to take the medication . . .

Some medications are best taken in one dose, while others are best divided into several doses during the day. Some medications cause drowsiness, while others are more activating. Medications with a sedative effect are taken at night, and activating medications are taken in the morning.

Carrying on with other activities . . .

If you do notice minor sedation or sleepiness in starting a medicine, avoid driving or carrying out hazardous activities. Sleepiness will usually diminish. If it does not, talk with your provider about a medication change.

Compatibility of a new medicine with other medications . . .

Talk with your provider about the compatibility of any new medicine with other medications you are taking.

Taking antidepressant medications and consuming alcohol . . .

Talk with your doctor about possible problems with consuming alcohol with prescription medications.

Increasing medication dose . . .

Talk with your doctor about the dose and if she or he plans to increase the dose.

Continuing to take the medication . . .

Take the medicine until you and your provider decide that you are ready to stop the medicine. Do not stop taking the medicine until you and your doctor have a plan for you to stop.

IV. YOUR ABILITY TO ANTICIPATE AND PLAN FOR PROBLEMS IN USING MEDICATIONS

Most medicines have mild side effects. The side effects may be temporary and diminish or disappear shortly after start of treatment. **If you experience side effects that are more severe, call your doctor.** She/he will probably suggest one or more of the following strategies: change the time you take the medicine, change the dose, add a second medicine, change to a different medicine, or use a remedy for the side effect.

The following table provides some examples of medication side effects and ways to cope with them.

Examples of Side Effects and Possible Remedies	
Dry Mouth	Drink plenty of water. Chew sugarless gum. Use sugarless drops.
Constipation	Eat more fiber-rich foods. Take a stool softener.
Drowsiness	Get fresh air and take frequent walks. Try taking your medicine earlier in the evening, or if you're taking your medicine in the day ask your doctor if you can take it at night.
Wakefulness	Take medications early in the day. Learn more about insomnia. Take a warm bath and have a light snack before bed. Avoid exercising vigorously late in the evening.
Blurred Vision	Remind yourself that this will be a temporary difficulty. Talk with your doctor if it persists.
Dizziness	Stand up slowly. Drink plenty of fluids. If you are worried, call your doctor.
Feeling Speeded Up	Tell yourself, "This will go away within three to five days." If it does not, call your doctor or nurse.
Sexual Problem	Talk with your doctor. A change in medications or a medication holiday may help.
Nausea or Appetite Loss	Take the medicine with food. Prepare food so that it is appetizing and colorful. Eat small healthy meals.