

# Understanding Depression



## What Is Depression?

Everyone feels sad once in a while but when feelings of sadness last for more than a few weeks and it affects your daily life, you may have depression. Depression is a common illness that can affect your thoughts, mood, physical health and daily activities. Depression affects people in different ways.

## What Are the Symptoms of Depression?

- Feeling sad, down or empty most of the day, almost every day for 2 weeks or longer
- Loss of interest or pleasure in work, school and activities
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Trouble sleeping at night, and staying awake during the day
- Lack of energy and no motivation
- Feeling irritable or agitated most of the time
- Difficulty thinking or making decisions
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or helpless
- Thoughts or talk of not wanting to live

## What Can You Do?

If you believe you have signs of depression, ask your doctor about depression screening. Your doctor will ask questions about the way you feel and evaluate your symptoms. Depression is very common and a highly treatable condition. There are many treatment options and resources available.

## What Are the Treatment Options for Depression?

It is important for you to talk openly with your doctor about how you are feeling. A doctor can diagnose your condition and go over your treatment options. There is no “one size fits all” treatment for depression. Your treatment plan will depend on what type of depression you have and how severe it is. Some of the common treatment options include:

- Medicines (Antidepressant drug treatment)
- Talk Therapy (Individual or group counseling)

Depression may affect your ability to make decisions or solve problems. With the right treatment, you can recover from depression with time. Getting treatment can help you begin to take control of your symptoms and start to feel better.

Your doctor can help explain and schedule the screenings and tests that you need.



## Helpful Tips

- If you have been prescribed antidepressants, give your current medicines more time to work. Be patient. Treatment takes time and commitment.
- Never stop treatment or medicines without first talking to your doctor. Doing this could cause the depression to return. Stopping medicines suddenly could also cause other symptoms.
- Consider making healthy lifestyle changes:
  - Exercise regularly
  - Eat well
  - Make sure to get enough sleep
  - Reduce stress and practice taking care of yourself
- Get social support.

## What Should You Ask Your Doctor?

Ask your doctor some basic questions about your depression treatment:

- Is depression the most likely cause of my symptoms?
- What kind of tests will I need?
- What treatment is likely to work best for me?
- Should I see a psychiatrist or other mental health professional?
- What are the side effects of my medicines?
- How long will it take for it to work?

Treatment for depression lessens the pain of despair and sadness. The sooner you get help, the sooner you can begin to feel better.



To learn more about behavioral health services, call CalOptima Health Behavioral Health toll-free at **1-855-877-3885 (TTY 711)** or visit us at [www.caloptima.org](http://www.caloptima.org).

This provides basic information only. It should not take the place of talking with your doctor.