



Depression

Depression is a serious medical disorder that can occur in college students, adults, adolescents, and children. Depression **is not** a sign of laziness or character weakness. Sometimes depression can run in families. It can be important to note whether relatives have also been diagnosed.

To diagnose Depression, experts expect to find 5 or more of the following symptoms:

- A feeling of being down in the dumps or really sad for no particular reason
- A lack of energy or feeling unable to do the simplest task
- An inability to enjoy the things that used to bring you pleasure
- A lack of desire to be with friends or family
- Feelings of irritability, anger, and/or anxiety
- An inability to concentrate
- A marked weight gain or loss; too much or too little interest in eating
- A significant change in sleep habits, such as trouble falling asleep or getting up
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Aches and pains even though nothing is physically wrong
- A lack of caring about what happens in the future
- Thoughts about death or suicide

Some adults who have depression indicate that they are very sad. However, some other adults who have depression report feeling frequently irritable and easily angered. They might even be surprised to hear their “anger” labeled as “depression.”



Experts indicate that the best treatment for most depression is a combination of treatments including talk therapy, education about the disorder, and sometimes medication.



Coping Strategies for Dealing with Depression

1. Be more mindful of what you eat and drink. Oftentimes, depression can lead an individual to high-calorie, high-sugar, high-caffeine food/drinks, which ultimately can increase the severity of the disorder. Try to eat healthier foods, and don't skip breakfast!
2. Push yourself to share your feelings with a trusted friend and/or family member. Get that person's observations about your status/progress. Get more social; fight the urge to isolate.
3. Be more mindful of your sleeping habits. If you do take a nap during the day, limit it to 30 minutes. Afternoon naps that exceed 30 minutes can often negatively impact overnight sleeping. Set up your bedroom so it encourages good sleep. Keep the room dark and at a comfortable temperature. Work to reduce stimulation at night to allow your brain to calm itself. Set a rule of shutting off electronics (e.g., computer, phone, television) at a certain hour each night. Aim to fall asleep at the same time each night.
4. Get exercise daily, whether walking, yoga, playing a sport, going to the gym, or doing an exercise routine in the privacy of your own home. In the winter months, be sure to get outside and get some Vitamin D from the sun while walking. Having an exercise buddy can help increase your motivation and success.
5. Journal each day, listing both concerns and indicators of progress. Make notes about what you eat and how you sleep.
6. Practice using "positive self-talk" throughout the day.
7. If medication is part of your treatment approach, take medication as prescribed. Pay close attention to how the medication makes you feel, what benefits it seems to be providing, and what side effects it might be causing. Communicate actively with your doctor/nurse practitioner. Sometimes, a medication dosage may need to be increased or decreased; other times, different medication might be suggested.
8. Avoid alcohol and drugs as they can interfere with the effectiveness of the antidepressant medication you are taking. Note that alcohol is a depressant, and mood can be adversely affected on the next few days after drinking.
9. Reach out for additional help whenever you need it. Depression can be extremely serious and even life-threatening, so please speak up. Develop a written safety plan with your therapist. Your plan should identify who you can contact and how, when there is an emergency.
10. Remember that treatment for depression takes time and diligent effort. With every step, you get closer to overcoming your depression.

If you feel that you are a danger to yourself and/or others, call or visit PACS immediately or call (603) 862-2090 if the center is closed. You can also contact that National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK, the UNH Police Department, or go to your local emergency room.



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