

Managing Your Depression

What Is Major Depressive Disorder?

Major depressive disorder -- or MDD -- is a mood disorder that causes feelings of sadness that won't go away and a loss of interest in things you normally enjoy. MDD can affect your quality of life, interfere with daily activities, and may even lead to physical problems.

MDD can be different for everyone, but symptoms will happen most of the day, and nearly every day, for at least 2 weeks. In addition to a depressed mood and a loss of interest, your symptoms may include:

- Fatigue (tiredness) or lack of energy
- Weight changes
- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Sleep problems
- Irritability, frustration
- Problems concentrating or making decisions
- Sexual problems
- Physical problems without a known cause, such as back pain or headaches
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Thoughts of death or suicide



Treating MDD

Whatever the cause of your depression, the first step is to let your doctor know how you're feeling. Having open and honest communication about your symptoms is the key to getting the care and treatment that's right for you. Getting treatment for MDD can help you feel more like yourself and make daily activities easier.

Treatments that your doctor may recommend, alone or in combination, to improve your mood and manage your symptoms can include lifestyle changes, medicine, and counseling (therapy). The main medicines used to treat MDD are antidepressants.

Types of antidepressants can include:

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
- Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
- Atypical antidepressants
- Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)
- Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)

All medicines can have side effects, and not everyone will have the same ones. Side effects that may happen with antidepressants can include:

- Nausea, diarrhea, constipation
- Increased appetite, weight gain
- Fatigue, drowsiness, dizziness
- Problems with sleep
- Anxiety
- Dry mouth
- Blurred vision
- Irritability, feeling jittery
- Sexual problems

Not all side effects are listed here. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or healthcare team for a complete list.

Is It a Symptom or a Side Effect?

This can be an important question to ask your doctor during treatment for MDD. You may feel reluctant to bring up certain symptoms or side effects, but talking openly with your doctor can help you make a treatment plan together that best fits your individual needs.



Medicines can work differently and have different side effects for different people. Your doctor may need to try different ones or different doses to find what works for you. Some medicines may also take several days or weeks to work. With side effects, certain ones can go away on their own over time, but others may last longer. To help manage side effects, your doctor may recommend switching to another treatment or adding a treatment.

It's important to remember to stick to your treatment plan and not stop or change any treatment without talking to your doctor first. Stopping or missing doses may cause feelings of

withdrawal, and quitting suddenly may cause MDD symptoms to get worse. Keeping track of any symptoms or side effects you have and recording them in a journal or diary can be helpful for when you talk to your doctor.

Talk to your doctor regularly and be sure to keep your appointments.
Questions you can ask about MDD can include:

What symptoms should I look for?

What treatments are available, and what are their side effects?

Are there any lifestyle changes I should make?

What should I do if I feel anxious or stressed?

Are there options for appointments if I can't visit in person?

Where can I find more information and resources?

Is there a support group I can join?