



# A FOCUS ON DEPRESSION

A tough disease — with a high rate of treatment success

**D**epression is a disease that does not discriminate between race, gender, income or age. Depression is an illness and not merely a “feeling.” It can cause sorrow for individuals, families and society as a whole if it is left untreated. Doctors and healthcare professionals are learning more about depression every day, including how to recognize it and how to treat it.

**Some types of depression** run in families. Other times, someone may experience depression after a stressful situation or trauma, such as the loss of a loved one. Whatever the cause, this patient education tool will assist you in better understanding depression.

- **RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION AND SEEK TREATMENT.** Common signs of depression include: trouble sleeping, not eating or eating too much, feeling sad all the time, trouble thinking and concentrating, loss of interest in the things you once liked to do, feeling worthless or lost. If you recognize these signs or know someone who has these problems, talk to your healthcare provider immediately.
- **MEDICATIONS KNOWN AS ANTIDEPRESSANTS** often are used to treat depression. These medications can be highly effective when taken as directed. They can even improve problems related to sleep, energy and concentration. One thing to remember is that these medications may take time to work, occasionally up to eight weeks, so it is important that you stay on them to give them a chance to make you feel better.
- **SHARE ANY PROBLEMS,** questions or concerns with your physician and provide a list of all current medications you are taking (both over-the-counter supplements and prescribed medications).
- **KEEP A JOURNAL** about how you feel. This will help your doctor track your progress, and will allow you to track your own progress.

- **SEEK THERAPY,** either alone or with your family. This will give you a chance to talk about your problems with someone who understands and can assist you in learning new ways to cope with the difficult situations you may encounter with depression.

**Lifestyle changes** can help you get a handle on your life and decrease your depression. These include:

- **EXERCISE** — The benefits of exercise are great. The more active you are, the better you will feel.
- **ADEQUATE REST** — Eight hours of sleep should be a nightly goal.
- **SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS** — Close relationships with those you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with and support groups will help you cope.
- **STRESS REDUCTION** — Learning how to cope with everyday problems is important. Learning to relax by taking slow deep breaths or participating in an activity that you enjoy can greatly improve how you feel.
- **HEALTHY DIET** — A good diet can help your body feel better and give you more energy. Diets low in fat and high in fruits and vegetables is a good place to start.

Sources: *National Alliance on Mental Illness, [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)*  
*National Institute of Mental Health, [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)*

**STAYING** Connected

Explore these sites and help gain control over your depression.

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

[www.narsad.org](http://www.narsad.org)

[www.ifred.org](http://www.ifred.org)

