

## OLDER TEEN

### Antidepressant Medication and YOU

#### How do the medications work?



The brain uses chemical messengers, called neurotransmitters, to send signals to different parts of the brain and the body. In young people with depression certain neurotransmitters may not be working the right way. The antidepressant medications help these neurotransmitters work better. Different antidepressant medications work on different neurotransmitters. That is why sometimes one medication will work better than another, and sometimes more than one medication will need to be tried before finding the one that works best for you. Also new medications and treatments are being developed and tested all the time.

#### How will medication help me?

Antidepressant medications may help you have:

- Improved mood
- Greater interest in activities
- Better concentration
- More energy
- More normal appetite
- Improved self-esteem
- More normal sleeping



#### Will taking medication change who I am?



You may be concerned about taking medication. You may think that it will make you different from other young people or that it will change who you are. These things aren't true. Medication will help you get back to the way you were before you became depressed, so you feel like yourself again. Taking medication is really no different than using glasses or wearing braces – it's only a tool to help you.

#### What are the problems with taking medications?

Like all medical treatments, there can be side effects with these medications. Side effects are usually very mild and tend to disappear as you continue to take the medication or as the dose is changed. Sometimes the side effects may continue, and this usually means that the doctor will change the medication. Some common side effects are:

- |                     |           |               |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|
| difficulty sleeping | headaches | irritability  |
| upset stomach       | dry mouth | blurry vision |

Specific side effects can be found in the individual medication information sheets. Make sure you tell your doctor if you experience any side effects. Your doctor may change the dose or switch to another medication.

#### How long will I have to take medication?



If the medication is helpful and you have no problems with it, you will probably continue to take the medication for a number of months, even after you feel better, to make sure the depression is gone. If your doctor decides to stop the medication, it will be slowly decreased over a number of weeks. Antidepressant medication should never be stopped without first talking to your doctor. Sometimes young people who have been depressed will become depressed again, so it is important to notice if your symptoms return. If you do become depressed again, you will probably be restarted on medication.



#### What is my role in taking medication for depression?

It is your responsibility to take your medication in the right amount at the right time. You should not take any other medication (even over-the-counter) without talking to your doctor first. And you should never use alcohol or drugs while taking medication; it is very dangerous and can be deadly. It is also your responsibility to never share your medication with anyone else. It can be harmful, and it is illegal. Most importantly, you should talk openly with your doctor about any problems and work together as a team in making decisions about medications.

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Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation  
A-DEP

## Antidepressant Medication and YOU

### How will the medication help me?

When you take medication for depression, it works in your brain to help you:

Be less sad  
Like doing things again  
Feel less grouchy  
Sleep and eat better



### How does the doctor know that the medication is working?

Your doctor will talk with you, your family and your teacher to know if the medication is working right. He may need to change the amount or kind of medication you get to make sure it works the best for you.



### Will the medication make me feel bad?

Probably not, but sometimes medications can cause side effects, which can make you feel strange. Some side effects are:



Trouble falling asleep  
Stomach ache  
Headaches  
Blurry vision  
Feeling thirsty a lot

If you notice any of these or if you are having any other problems, tell your parents and doctor. Most of the time side effects are not serious and will go away.

### What is my role?

- Learn what medication you are taking, how much to take, and what it is for.
- It's very important to take your medication when your mom, dad or teacher tells you.
- You should help remember when to take your medication.
- Even if you feel okay, you need to take your medication every day.
- You should never share your medication with anyone else. It can be dangerous and it's against the law.

# Patient Handout

## Psychological Counseling for Depression

### Quick Facts About Psychological Counseling/Psychotherapy

In psychological counseling, youth with depression work with a qualified mental health care specialist who listens to them, talks, and helps them correct overly negative thinking and improve their relationships with others.

### Treating Depression with Psychological Counseling/Psychotherapy

Psychological counseling has been shown to be effective in treating many youth with depression. Psychological counseling can be done individually (with only you and a mental health specialist) or in a group (with you, a mental health specialist, and other youth with similar problems). More than half of the people with mild to moderate depression respond well to psychological counseling. While the length of time that persons are involved in counseling differs, people with depression can typically expect to attend a weekly hour-long counseling session for 8-20 weeks. If your depression is not noticeably improved after six to twelve weeks of counseling, this usually means that you need to try a different treatment for your depression. Psychological counseling by itself is not recommended as the only treatment for people whose depression is more severe. Medication is needed for this type of depression, and it can be taken in combination with psychological counseling.

### What Can You Do to Help Your Clinician Most Effectively Treat Your Depression with Psychological Counseling?

Keep all of your appointments with the mental health specialist.

Be honest and open and ask questions.

Work cooperatively with the mental health specialist (for example, complete tasks assigned to you as part of the therapy).

Keep appointments with your primary care clinician and tell him/her how the therapy is working (such as whether your depression is getting better or worse).



*Adapted with permission by GLAD-PC from Rost K. Training Primary Care Nurses to Improve Depression Treatment. NIMH grant MH54444*

# Self-Care Success!

## Things you can do to help yourself.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** When people are depressed they often forget to take care of themselves. By setting self-care goals you can take an active role in helping yourself feel better more quickly. Choose one or two of the areas below and set a goal. Make sure the goal is clear and reasonable. In the space below the boxes rate how likely you are to follow through on the goal(s) you set. If you are not very sure you can follow through on your goal you may want to find alternatives or make some adjustments.

 <p><b>Stay Physically Active</b></p> <p>Each week during the next month I will spend at least ____ days doing the following physical activity for ____ minutes.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(Pick a specific date and time and make it reasonable!)</p>	 <p><b>Schedule Pleasant Activities</b></p> <p>Even though I may not feel motivated I will commit to scheduling ____ fun activities each week for the next month. They are _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(Specify when and with whom.)</p>	 <p><b>Eat Balanced Meals</b></p> <p>Even if I don't feel like it, I will eat ____ balanced meals per day to include _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(Choose healthy foods.)</p>
 <p><b>Spend Time With People Who Can Support You</b></p> <p>During the next month I will spend at least ____ days for at least ____ minutes at a time with:</p> <p>_____ doing: _____</p> <p>_____ doing: _____</p> <p>_____ doing: _____</p> <p>(Who?) (What?) (e.g. talking, eating, playing)</p>	 <p><b>Spend Time Relaxing</b></p> <p>Each week I will spend at least ____ days relaxing for ____ minutes by participating in the following activities: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(e.g. reading, writing in a journal, deep breathing, muscle relaxation)</p>	 <p><b>Small Goals &amp; Simple Steps</b></p> <p>The problem is: _____</p> <p>My goal is: _____</p> <p>Step 1: _____</p> <p>Step 2: _____</p> <p>Step 3: _____</p>

How likely are you to follow through with these activities prior to your next visit?											
Not Likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Very Likely

What might get in the way of your completing these activities prior to your next visit?
_____
<b>Solution(s) to the above barriers</b>
_____
_____
_____