

Depression

If you had chest pains, would you go to the doctor?

You probably would.

How about if you felt like crying all the time and did not know why?



Both problems are important and need to be treated, but many of us do not take mental health problems seriously. Our feelings, moods and outlook affect our bodies and our overall health. Mood changes or depression are often caused by physical changes in the brain. Sometimes depression can start after major changes in your life, like the death of a loved one.

We all feel sad sometimes – that is a normal part of life. It is NOT normal to feel sad all or most of the time. You could be depressed if you:

- ✓ Start to think that life has no meaning
- ✓ Lose interest in your family or work
- ✓ Stop wanting to do the things you used to enjoy
- ✓ No longer feel like meeting your friends
- ✓ Have changes in your eating and sleeping habits (for example, if you feel tired all the time)
- ✓ Feel guilty, nervous or grouchy
- ✓ Have a lot of aches and pains for no known reason
- ✓ Cry a lot

If depression is not treated, it can lead to suicidal thoughts. Take the quiz on the next page to find out if you might have depression.





During the **past month**, have you **often** been bothered by:

1) Little interest or pleasure in doing things? Yes No

2) Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless? Yes No

- If you answered **Yes** to either of the above questions, continue with the questions below.
- If you answered **No** but still have concerns, talk with your doctor about those concerns.

For the last 2 weeks, have you had any of the following problems **nearly every day**?

3) Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much? Yes No

4) Feeling tired or having very little energy? Yes No

5) Poor appetite or overeating? Yes No

6) Little interest or pleasure in doing things? Yes No

7) Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless? Yes No

8) Feeling bad about yourself – or that you are a failure – or have let yourself or your family down? Yes No

9) Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television? Yes No

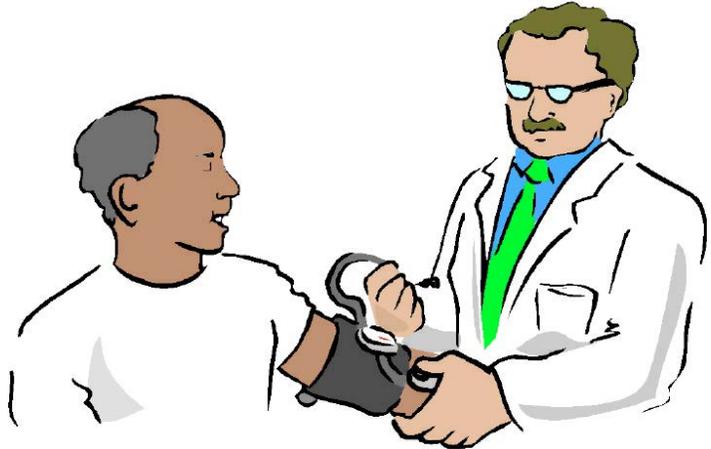
10) Being so fidgety or restless that you were moving around a lot more than usual? Or moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Yes No

11) In the last two weeks, have you had thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way? Yes No

If you answered **Yes** to five or more of the above questions, you may have depression. It doesn't mean you are weak... you just have a condition that may need to be treated. The good news is you do not have to feel this way – you can take control!

A medical checkup is a good place to start.

- Don't wait for your doctor to ask you about this.
- Tell your doctor all the symptoms you have had and what's going on in your life. Bring this quiz to your appointment.
- Your doctor will try to figure out **why** you are feeling depressed.



You may also contact Alliance's behavioral health care vendor: **Beacon** at **1-855-856-0577**.

What to expect at the doctor's office

Your doctor may order some lab tests to see if there is a physical reason for the depression. You will need to tell your doctor what medicines you are taking (including herbal medicines), to make sure they are not causing you to feel depressed. Then you can decide whether to take medicines for the depression, go to "talk" therapy, or do both.

Talk therapy (also called psychotherapy) can help you figure out what is causing the depression and how to deal with it.

If you need to take **medicines** for depression, remember that it takes some time for them to work. Don't stop taking them unless you have bad side effects. If that happens, tell your doctor right away and you can change to another type of medicine.

Here are some other things you can do to feel better:

- ✓ Get regular exercise and eat healthy. Some good exercises are walking and biking. When you exercise, your body sends your brain “messengers” that make you feel better.
- ✓ Spend more time outdoors in the daytime. Daylight can sometimes make a difference! In fact, some people feel more depressed in the colder months, when the days are shorter and darker. Tell your doctor if you feel this way.
- ✓ Hang out with people who make you feel good. If you are comfortable with them, share your feelings.



Remember, our minds and our bodies are connected, and both are important for our well-being.

Take it one day at a time. If you stick to your treatment plan, you should start to feel a little better every day. And one day you might feel like yourself again

Who gets depression? Almost anyone can...

Women are two times as likely as men to get depressed. Some women get depressed after they have a baby. This is called postpartum depression. If it's not treated, it can cause serious problems for the mother and the baby.

Men are less likely to admit that they feel depressed. They may hide their feelings by drinking too much alcohol or using illegal drugs.





- Pretend to be sick
- Refuse to go to school
- Worry that their parents will die
- Develop a negative attitude
- Stop hanging out with their friends
- Stop doing the things they used to enjoy
- Have a drop in their grades
- Act up and get into trouble at school

If it's not treated, depression in children can lead to the use of alcohol and drugs. They might start unhealthy sexual relationships. And in some cases they might try to kill themselves. If you think your child is depressed, get help right away!

Older Adults can get depressed, too. It is not a normal part of getting old, however. If the depression is treated, it will be easier to deal with other health problems.

Did you move here from another country? Sometimes it can be hard to get used to a new place. You might feel lonely and sad being away from your family and friends. This is normal. But if you start to feel sad or depressed all the time, please get help. You do not have to suffer. If your doctor does not speak your language, the Alliance will send an interpreter who does.

If you need an interpreter during your appointments, please call:

Alliance Member Services at 510-747-4567 (TTY: 711 or 1-800-735-2929), Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Alliance CompleteCare (HMO SNP) members can call Alliance Care Advisors at 1-877-585-7526 (TTY: 711 or 1-800-735-2929), 7 days a week, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.

You don't have to do this alone! To find out more on depression and other health concerns, call Alliance Health Programs at **510-747-4577**.