

Stress and Anxiety

Stress can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous.

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, unease, and worry. The source of these symptoms is not always known.

Signs

Stress is a normal feeling. In small doses, stress can help you get things done. Stress does not affect all people the same way.

Many people feel stress in their body. You may be having stomach pain, headaches, and muscle tightness or pain.

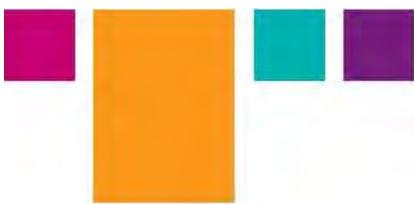
You may have a harder time focusing, feel tired most of the time, or lose your temper more often. Stress may also cause sexual problems. It can also cause problems with falling or staying asleep and nightmares.

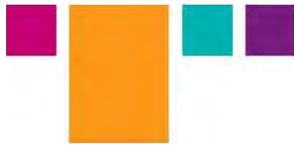
When you are very stressed, you may notice:

- A faster heart rate
- Skipped heartbeats
- Rapid breathing
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Dizziness

Other symptoms include:

- Loose stools
- Frequent need to urinate
- Dry mouth
- Problems swallowing





Home Care

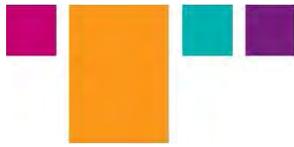
What relieves stress is not the same for everyone. Making certain lifestyle changes is the best start.

- Start with eating a well-balanced, healthy diet as well as getting enough sleep and exercise.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake and don't use nicotine, cocaine, or other street drugs.
- Finding healthy, fun ways to cope with stress helps most people. You can learn and practice ways to help you relax. Find out about yoga, tai chi, or meditation.
- Take breaks from work. Make sure to balance fun activities with your job and family duties. Schedule some leisure time every day. Spend time with people you enjoy, including your family.
- Try to make things with your hands, play an instrument, or listen to music.
- Think about what might be giving you stress. Keep a journal of what is going on when you have these feelings.
- Then, find someone you trust who will listen to you. Often just talking to a friend or loved one is all that you need to feel better. Most areas also have support groups and hotlines that can help.
- Ask your health care provider if any drugs or medicines you are taking can cause anxiety.



When to Contact a Medical Professional

Call the suicide hotline at **1-800-273-8255** if you have thoughts of suicide.



Reasons you may want to seek more help are:

- You have feelings of panic, such as dizziness, rapid breathing, or a racing heart beat.
- You are unable to work or function at home or at your job.
- You have fears that you cannot control.
- You are having memories of a traumatic event.

Do not stop taking any prescribed medicines without talking to your doctor.

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

Your doctor will want to know what medicines you are taking. Your doctor will also want to know if you use alcohol or drugs. You will have a physical exam and maybe some blood tests.

Your doctor may refer you to a mental health care provider. You can talk to them about your feelings, what seems to make your stress better or worse, and why you think you are having this problem.

Sometimes, medicines may help treat your symptoms.

Talk with your doctor or health care staff if you have any questions or concerns about your anxiety.

Questions? Alameda Alliance for Health is here to help.

Toll-Free: 1-877-932-2738

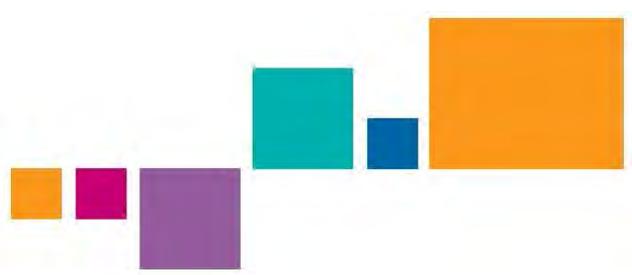
CRS/TTY: 711 or 1-800-9735-2929

8am-5pm, Monday-Friday

www.alamedaalliance.org



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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?

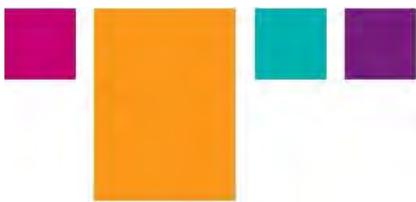


Both problems are important and need to be treated, but many of us do not take mental health problems seriously. Our feelings, moods and outlook affect our bodies and our overall health. Mood changes or depression are often caused by physical changes in the brain. Sometimes depression can start after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

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**.

Relaxation*

You can teach yourself to relax. These three relaxation methods are simple and they work. Try to do them once or twice a day. Pick a time and place where you can be alone. With practice you can use these skills, anywhere, anytime to help you cope with life's ups and downs.

One: Roll Breathing

Full deep breathing is a way to release tension. You may sit, stand or lie down to practice this breathing.

1. Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. Notice how your hands move as you breathe in and out.
2. Fill your lower lungs by breathing so that the hand on your lower belly goes up when you inhale and the hand on your chest remains still. Do this 8–10 times.
3. Inhale into your upper chest. As you do this, your hand on the chest will rise and the hand on your belly will fall.
4. Now switch off between the two. Inhale into your lower lungs and exhale. Then inhale into your upper chest and exhale. Practice this breathing for 3–5 minutes.

Caution: Some people get dizzy the first few times they try Roll Breathing. If this happens slow down your breathing or take a break. Get up slowly.



*Adapted from *Healthwise Handbook: A Self Care Guide for You*, Donald K. Kemper.

Two: Muscle Relaxation

Lie down on your back and stretch out on a carpeted floor or rug. Tense each of the following muscle groups hard, but not to the point of cramping, for 4–10 seconds. Then give yourself 10–20 seconds to release it and relax. After you have tensed a group, try to keep it relaxed while you are tensing other groups.

Body part	Create tension
Hands	Clench them.
Wrists and forearms	Extend them and bend the hands back at the wrist.
Biceps and upper arms	Clench your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows and flex your biceps.
Shoulders	Shrug them (bring your shoulders up towards your ears and let them down).
Forehead	Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
Around the eyes	Close your eyes as tightly as possible (remove contact lenses first.)
Cheeks and jaws	Grin from ear to ear.
Around the mouth	Press your lips together tightly.
Back of the neck	Press the back of your head against the floor.
Front of the neck	Touch your chin to your chest.
Chest	Take a deep breath and hold it, then exhale.
Back	Arch your back up and away from the floor.
Stomach	Suck it into a tight knot.
Hips and buttocks	Squeeze your buttocks together tightly.
Thighs	Clench them.
Lower Legs	Point your toes toward your face. Then point your toes away and curl them downward at the same time.

Three: Relaxation Response

1. Lie in a place where you can stretch out comfortably. Close your eyes.
2. Begin to relax each set of muscles that you tensed above.
3. Notice your breathing. Breathe from your belly. As you exhale, say a calming word to yourself. Repeat this word each time you exhale. Continue this for 10–20 minutes. As distracting thoughts and images enter your mind, don't dwell on them. Allow them to drift away.
4. Sit quietly for several minutes. Then open your eyes.

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