



Depression, Anxiety, and Physical Health Problems

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Overview

Depression and other health problems

People who have long-term (chronic) diseases such as arthritis, asthma, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, hepatitis C, or stroke often also have depression. Depression also often occurs with chronic pain. Depression may occur with these problems because:

- The everyday stress of dealing with a chronic disease causes the depression or makes it worse.
- People who have depression may find it hard to take care of their health. This can lead to health problems.
- People who have depression may have a hard time being active or eating a balanced diet. They may also have unhealthy habits, like smoking.
- Some chronic diseases change your body chemistry. This can help cause depression. Cushing's syndrome and an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) are examples of this.
- Depression is linked with some chronic diseases. For example, people who have diabetes or coronary artery disease are more likely to get depression. And people with depression are more likely to develop diabetes or coronary artery disease.

Managing depression

Counseling and medicine usually work well to treat depression. Sometimes counseling alone is enough. Often a combination of the two works best.

You can try many things to help yourself when you feel depressed. These things may also help lower the chance of depression coming back.

- Get regular exercise. Even something as easy as walking can help you feel better.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Get enough sleep.
- Avoid drinking alcohol, using drugs, or using medicines that have not been prescribed to you.
- Think positively. How you think can affect how you feel.
- Get support from others.

Taking good care of yourself is important as you recover from depression. If your doctor prescribed medicines,

take them exactly as they are prescribed. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, including counseling. And call your doctor if you are having problems.

Anxiety and other health problems

When you have a chronic health problem, such as diabetes, you may feel anxious about your condition. Or you may worry about the future. This is normal. But if anxiety continues, it can be hard for you to take care of your health. Anxiety is treatable, so talk to your doctor if you have concerns.

Managing anxiety

Home treatment, combined with professional treatment, can help relieve anxiety. Here are some tips to help you cope with anxiety.

- Know your anxiety.
Recognize and accept your anxiety about specific fears or situations. Then make a plan for dealing with it. For example, if you are always worrying about finances, set up a budget or savings plan.
- Don't dwell on past problems.
Change what you can to help you feel more comfortable with present concerns. But let go of past problems or things you can't change.
- Be kind to your body.
 - Relieve tension with exercise or massage.
 - Try stress-relief techniques that focus on relaxing your mind and your body.
 - Get enough rest.
 - Practice healthy thinking, and stop negative thoughts. Choose helpful thoughts to replace the unhelpful ones.
 - Avoid alcohol, caffeine, chocolate, and nicotine. They may make you more anxious. Some drugs, such as cocaine, crack, and speed (amphetamines), also can cause anxiety.
- Engage your mind.
 - Get out and do something you enjoy. For example, go to a funny movie or take a walk or hike.
 - Plan your day. Having too much or too little to do can make you more anxious.
 - Keep a diary of your symptoms. Or discuss your fears with a good friend. Confiding in others sometimes relieves stress.
- Do things with others.
Get involved in social groups, or volunteer to help others. Being alone can make things seem worse than they are.
- Get support.
Learn about resources available in your community.
 - Talk with your human resources officer about counseling benefits that may be available through your employee assistance program.
 - Check with your insurance company to see what mental health benefits are available.
 - Contact your public health department for information on community mental health programs.

Related Information

- Depression
- Feeling Depressed
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Living With More Than One Health Problem

Credits

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