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# UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION.

— *DEPRESSION IS A COMMON* —

# BUT OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD ILLNESS.

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Living with a chronic condition has many challenges. Changes in your lifestyle habits, activity level or independence may cause feelings of sadness. But when those feelings persist, especially longer than two weeks, it may be time to talk with your doctor.

## Signs of depression

If you're depressed, you may lose interest in things you used to enjoy. Maybe you're eating or sleeping too little or too much. Or you may not want to be with people and are starting to isolate yourself. This kind of withdrawal can cause you pain and it can affect those around you.

Here are a few other common symptoms of depression:

- Feeling hopeless, pessimistic, guilty or helpless
- Becoming easily fatigued or restless
- Having difficulty concentrating or making a decision
- Experiencing thoughts of death or suicide

Depression is a complex illness that can be mild or severe. And it can be different from person to person. If your symptoms have lasted longer than two weeks, it's time to speak with your doctor.

## How to get help

Your first step should be to visit a doctor or mental health specialist. Some medications or medical conditions can cause symptoms similar to depression. An interview, exam and lab tests may be ordered to rule out these possibilities.

If a medical evaluation finds no obvious causes, the next step should be a psychological evaluation. A health professional may ask you questions that will help guide better treatment. This might include medication, psychotherapy or other treatments.

## Stay connected

Try to be active and get some exercise, as recommended by your doctor. Be around other people. Talk to those you trust and ask for support, too. But don't expect your energy and positive outlook to pop back into place. That should return over time, as you get the help you need.

If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others, call your health care professional, 911 or a suicide hotline such as **1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)**. Or have someone drive you to your nearest emergency department. If you feel that you are in immediate danger of hurting yourself or others, call 911 or your local emergency services immediately.

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### Sources

National Institute of Mental Health. What is depression? Accessed: January 15, 2016.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>

American Psychiatric Association. Depression. Accessed: January 15, 2016.

<http://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>

**This program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.** This program is not a substitute for a doctor's or professional's care. This program and its components may not be available in all states and coverage exclusions may apply.

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