

Understanding and Following Your Treatment Plan for Depression

You've taken the first important steps in managing your depression—seeing your doctor and starting treatment. The next step is to commit to following and staying with your treatment plan. To help you do this, here is a list of some things you should understand as well as things to do.

Do you know what your antidepressant medicine is, when and how much to take, and what the possible side effects are?

If the doctor didn't go over all of this or you forgot what was said, ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain it. You should also ask if there are any medicines you should not take at the same time. Your antidepressant medicine is very important and must be used only as prescribed.

Do you understand why your prescription may be for only a couple of weeks?

When getting antidepressant medicine for the first time, the prescription may be for only 2 to 3 weeks. This is so the doctor can see how well it is working and if the dosage is right for you.

Have you told your doctor and pharmacist about any other medicines you are currently taking?

You should inform your doctor and pharmacist about all medicines you are taking and that you plan to take. This includes any prescription or over-the-counter (nonprescription) remedies and natural herbal products. Sometimes other products can interfere with how well your antidepressant medicine works or can cause a side effect.

Do you understand that it is important to take your antidepressant medicine as your doctor prescribed?

It is important to take your medicine as prescribed so your doctor will know how well the medicine is working. Try making a daily dosage chart that you can check off each day, and take it with you when you next see your doctor. You might want to get a daily pill container to help you to remember to take your medicine. Do not take any extra doses of your antidepressant medicine unless instructed by your doctor. Failing to take your antidepressant medicine as prescribed by your doctor may reduce the chance of your medicine working as intended.

Do you understand that it is important to report any changes in how you are feeling to your doctor or therapist?

Have you noticed any big changes—good or bad—in your outlook or attitude? You may find it helpful to write these changes down and to tell your doctor or therapist at your next appointment. Call them if the changes are dramatic, especially if you are having wide mood swings, like being emotionally high one day and very low the next.

Do you understand that it is important to make the changes in your daily life that your doctor suggested?

Your doctor may have suggested that you try a few things to help reduce some of the problems associated with your depression. For example, you may have been given information about talk therapy, diet, exercise, or how to sleep better.

Have you scheduled your next doctor appointment yet?

Having regular doctor appointments is very important. It will help your doctor make any changes you may need in your treatment as you progress. And in between appointments, make sure to call your doctor to report any significant changes you experience.

You shouldn't expect immediate results from your treatment plan—it will take some time to work. But by following it and staying in close contact with your doctor or therapist, you may help increase your chances of achieving your treatment goals.

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