

# Lifestyle Changes for Depression



NERVOTONIN

## Overview

Feeling sad from time to time is a normal part of life, but feeling crippled by your sadness on a daily basis could be a sign of something else. Depression is a mood disorder characterized by profound feelings of sadness, isolation, hopelessness, or emptiness.

Depression can be overwhelming and prevent you from enjoying things you once had interest in. It affects everyone differently, but it can interfere with your daily activities, work, and life in general.

Treating depression effectively means doing more than taking medications and going to therapy. The more you change your lifestyle to ensure a healthy mind and body, the more you'll be able to cope with the challenges of depression.

Below are some ways you can improve your lifestyle to complement your depression treatment. As always, consult with your doctor before making any changes.

## Healthy eating

Eating healthy is good for your body and will help your mood overall. The easiest way to improve your diet is to cut out junk food. Avoid foods high in refined sugar and foods packed with saturated fats. Incorporate healthy foods into your diet, including:

### Fatty acids

Omega-3s and omega-6s are two types of healthy fatty acids. These can be found in:

- fish

- nuts
- fresh fruits and vegetables
- olive oil

### **Amino acids**

Neurotransmitters, the messengers in the brain, are made of amino acids. Neurotransmitters play a role in mental health, so include amino-acid-rich foods, such as the following, in your diet:

- meat
- dairy products
- certain fruits and vegetables

### **Complex carbohydrates**

Carbohydrates can help stimulate production of the feel-good neurotransmitter serotonin. Carbohydrates also help your body absorb amino acids more effectively, which helps you synthesize proteins. Your brain runs on glucose, which is also derived from carbohydrates. Complex carbohydrates can be found in:

- whole grains
- legumes
- vegetables, such as spinach and broccoli
- fruits, such as oranges and pears

**Exercise** increases your body's production of natural antidepressants. According to the Mayo Clinic, exercising for 30 minutes a day, three to five days a week, can help alleviate depression without the use of medication. It can help:

- reduce stress
- improve mood
- boost self-esteem
- provide restful sleep

### **Weight loss**

Losing weight improves your self-esteem and overall health, and you don't have to starve yourself or hop on a fad diet. Eating right and exercising regularly is the tried-and-true method for losing weight and keeping it off. The more you do these two things, the easier it'll be to stick with them.

## **Meditation**

Meditation is the practice of engaging in a mental exercise, such as deep breathing or repeating a phrase or mantra, to achieve some kind of benefit. In the Buddhist tradition, the goal of meditation is spiritual enlightenment. Many modern practices focus on stress relief and relaxation. Meditation can help relieve anxiety that sometimes accompanies depression. If depression is disrupting your sleep habits, deep-breathing techniques can help calm your mind to help you sleep better.

## **Sleep**

A common complication of depression is lack of sleep. Lying awake in bed at night with a brain that won't calm down, or waking in the middle of the night and not being able to get back to sleep, are common symptoms. Fatigue from lack of sleep can add to symptoms of depression, so proper sleep is an important part of a depression treatment plan. Develop a calming bedtime routine that can help you wind down at the end of the day, and follow a consistent sleep schedule to improve the amount and quality of sleep you get.

## **Relationships**

Depression can be alienating, and the right network of friends and loved ones can help you overcome your issues. Spend time with positive, supportive, and loving people to help you through rocky times.

## **Stress management**

Stress is a part of life, but chronic, long-term stress can be debilitating, especially for someone with depression. Stress builds upon itself, so it's essential to combat stress with calming, soothing experiences. Stress management is different for everyone, so you are the best person to decide which healthy activities help you. Some ideas to consider are:

- watching your favorite movie
- reading a good book
- practicing a hobby
- listening to music
- writing in a journal
- exercising

## **Outlook**

Depression is a serious disorder. Its symptoms of sadness and isolation can be debilitating. There are many things you can do on your own to treat depression and alleviate its symptoms. Stay healthy by eating right, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep to combat depression. Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing symptoms of depression and if you want to make any changes to your lifestyle.