



**A Resource for Patients**

# Coping With Major Depressive Disorder

Coping with major depressive disorder is not easy. It takes work.  
It takes time. But the good news is that you can do it. You can feel better.  
This booklet can help you get started.

This resource is provided to you as an educational resource. It is not intended as,  
nor is it a replacement for, medical advice and/or treatment from your doctor.



# Coping With Major Depressive Disorder



**Do not stop taking your medications without talking to your doctor.**

## **Look at your health as a whole**

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is a serious medical health issue that may affect your thoughts, feelings, behavior, mood, and physical health. It may not be your only health issue. Other factors, such as medical conditions, chronic pain, and alcohol or drug abuse, have been linked to depression. Therefore, it's important to let your doctors know about any other problems or conditions you may have.

It's important to follow your doctor's treatment plan, including taking your medications exactly as prescribed. Your doctors should also be aware of all the medications you take. This includes over-the-counter medications and herbal and nutritional supplements. Keep a list. Share it with them.

Taking care of your health as a whole may include living a healthier lifestyle. Maintaining a well-balanced diet and engaging in low-key activities such as meditation, yoga, or Tai Chi may help alleviate stress and encourage positive mental and physical health benefits.

## **Watch out for “triggers”**

There is no one cause or trigger for depression. Feelings of depression may occur due to a variety of factors, some of which you can control and others that you cannot.



## Understand as much as you can about MDD

There are many useful sources of information on depression, including books and websites. Learn all you can about medications, keep up with current research and treatment options, and consider joining a support group to help you get to know others with MDD.

## Lean on your support network

When you live with MDD, having emotional support from others living with depression can be an important part of recovery. It may be helpful to share your thoughts, fears, and questions with others who have MDD.

Caregivers, family, and friends may also offer emotional support. They can offer support just by being there for you, and talking and listening to what you may be feeling and thinking. Caregivers may also provide assistance in getting to doctor's appointments.

**It's important to be able to confide in a trusted friend or family member. Spend time with the people in your life and try not to isolate yourself — let others help you.**

## If Your Symptoms Are Getting Worse

If your actions are potentially harmful to yourself or other people, tell someone who can help right away:

- Call your doctor's office
- Call 911 for emergency services
- Go to the nearest hospital emergency room
- Call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 to be connected to a trained counselor

**Don't go it alone.**



**Ask for help when you need it.**



## Resources

### National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

A U.S. mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

### National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

A U.S. mental health organization focused on prevention, recovery, and cure of mental illnesses through basic and clinical research. The Institute also conducts research to help find optimal ways to provide available treatments and services directly to the community.

### Mental Health America

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

A community-based network, with affiliates across the United States, dedicated to helping all Americans live mentally healthy lives through advocacy, education, programs, and services.

### PsychCentral

[www.psychcentral.com](http://www.psychcentral.com)

A mental health social network that provides a directory of online psychology and mental health resources for patients.



**Tell someone  
if your symptoms  
are getting worse.**



# Take the Pledge

## Promise yourself to do all you can to be well.

**Many people are ready to help you cope with your major depressive disorder (MDD). You need to be ready to give it your best shot, too. Make a promise to yourself right now that you will. Put it in writing.**

By signing this pledge form, you promise you will do the right thing to support your own health. That means doing all you can to work toward being well.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
solemnly swear that I will work to the best of my ability to support and protect my health for the benefit of my friends, my family, my loved ones, and myself. This includes faithfully following all instructions my doctors give me and faithfully taking all medications prescribed for me.

My signature \_\_\_\_\_

My witness \_\_\_\_\_

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_



# Living With Major Depressive Disorder?

**Remember, you are not alone.  
Your treatment team is here to help.**