SCAN ME

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- Do I have depression?
- Are there medications I can take that would help me? Would they interact with my heart medication?
- What lifestyle changes should I make to help me feel better?
- What treatment options are best for me, and what are the risks and benefits of each treatment option?
- How soon will I start to feel better?
- What warning signs should I look for that would indicate I need help right away?
- What social support options might be best for me?

Depression and Heart Disease

Mended Hearts®

Contact Us

If you would like to receive support or need more information, please contact us at:

The Mended Hearts, Inc.
1579 US Highway 19
Leesburg, GA 31763
1-888-HEART99

www.mendedhearts.org

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Living Longer with Heart Disease

Discussion Guide for Patients & Caregivers

What is Depression?

Most people don't realize it, but depression is fairly common in people who have had a heart event. In fact, about 1 in every 3 people who have had a heart attack report feelings of depression.

Depression is not a character flaw, and it is not something you can just "snap out of." It is a serious chronic condition that requires medical care. The good news is that most people can be treated effectively and experience at least some relief from their symptoms.

It can be hard to define depression, but common symptoms include:

- Feeling sad and crying often
- Loss of interest in activities you typically enjoy
- Changes in appetite and/or weight
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Loss of energy
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Having thoughts of death or suicide

You may believe you just have the blues, but if you experience these symptoms nearly every day, all day, for two or more weeks, you may have depression--especially for the first two symptoms. People who have had a heart event may have more severe symptoms, so it's important to get treatment.

Effects of Depression

Depression can affect everything in your daily life, including recovery from your heart event. In fact, depression can make recovery more difficult because it can lead to:

- A lower desire to follow your treatment plan
- Greater likelihood to smoke and drink
- Greater risk for another heart event
- Lower desire for physical activity
- Bad eating habits
- Anxiety
- Problems at work or school
- Family and relationship problems
- Social isolation
- Suicide

Treatment for Depression

Medication: Antidepressant medication is a commonly used treatment approach because it is very effective in reducing symptoms.

Talk Therapy: Another important option for treating depression is psychotherapy, or “talk therapy.” These counseling sessions with a mental health provider can be a very effective part of your treatment plan. In fact, research has demonstrated that a combination of medication and talk therapy tends to work best for most people with depression.

Social Support: Many people find that having a social network helps them cope. This can include group therapy, support groups, or other positive groups.

Lifestyle: Diet and exercise play a key role in combating depression. Eating a healthy diet is an important part of your treatment plan after a heart event; sticking to it can help keep depression away too. Getting enough sleep, meditation, finding a hobby and walking outside can help also.

Suicidal Thoughts & Feelings

Thoughts of suicide are not something to take lightly. Make an appointment with a healthcare professional or in the case of an emergency, call 911 right away. Don't hesitate to call a friend, family member or spiritual leader to talk about how you are feeling. You can speak with a trained counselor at any time (24 hours a day) by calling The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-8255**. However you handle these thoughts and feelings, you don't have to go through it alone.