

Managing Depression: A survival guide for cancer patients and survivors

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How common is depression?

- Among the general population, about 7 % of the population will experience clinically significant depression in their lifetime
- Among cancer patients, the risk is higher
17-40% depending on how it is studied

Why?

- Factors that contribute to the development of depression:
 - Family history – genetics
 - Pessimistic personality
 - Stressful events
 - Serious medical illness
 - Medical treatments
 - Other neurological or psychological illnesses

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How does having cancer contribute to depression?

- STRESS

- Cancer treatment
 - Chemotherapy
 - Hormones
 - Tumor chemicals

What are symptoms of depression?

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and/or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Overeating, or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts
- Persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment

Differences in Depression Symptoms

- Men, women, older adults, and children all have different symptom patterns with depression
- Coping strategies and treatments may also differ – the important thing is to recognize the problem

I am Depressed, What Next?

- If you think you might be experiencing depression, see a doctor
- It is treatable
- It is medically important (it makes other existing medical conditions worse, and reduces the likelihood that you will do well)
- It can be life-threatening
- It has the biggest negative impact on **Quality of Life**

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Medical Options for Treatment of Depression

- Medication

- If one type doesn't work try a different type or add an additional medication

- Concerns with Medications

- Side effects?

- Increased risk of suicide? (from Cheryl : Dr. Kvale explained this is a risk if suicide has already been contemplated before antidepressants are started; antidepressants do not cause someone to suddenly have these thoughts)

Managing Depression – Coping Strategies

- Positive coping strategies

- Exercise

- Stress reduction activities

- Meditation

- Massage

- Knitting

- Regular hours

- Health dietary choices

- Make connections with friends

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What to do?

- Set small goals
- Get a doctor's appointment
- Take a walk
- Greet one person in the grocery store
- Go to bed on time
- Say a prayer

Who can help?

- Your primary care doctor
- UAB Supportive Care 975-8190
- Your oncologist