



Health and Wellness Newsletter

December 2011

Kaiser Permanente Colorado

Depression

Who is at risk for depression?

Depression is more common than many people realize. Often, people who become depressed don't get help because they are ashamed or uncomfortable talking about it. If you think a loved one may be depressed, make sure he or she understands that it's not a sign of weakness. It's a physiological condition that can be treated by a doctor.

If you have a family history of depression, you're more likely to experience it yourself. A major change, like the death of a loved one, loss of a job, or family and relationship issues can bring on depression. Medical conditions like a stroke, a heart attack, or cancer can also trigger depression, but sometimes subtle changes like hormonal shifts related to pregnancy or even a woman's monthly cycle can also be an influence. Women are twice as likely to experience depression as men. Children and teenagers can also become depressed, so pay attention if your child seems to show the symptoms.

What are the symptoms of depression?

If you've experienced five or more of the following signs nearly every day for two weeks or longer, talk to your doctor.

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or easily angered
- Feeling unfocused, as though your thinking is fuzzy and you can't concentrate or make decisions
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- A change in your sleep patterns, whether it's sleeping too much or not sleeping enough
- A change in your appetite or rapid weight gain or loss with no explanation
- Feeling restless or unable to settle down
- A loss of energy that makes you feel too tired for ordinary activities like going to work
- Feeling like you don't want to go on living
- Feeling like activities you used to enjoy are pointless or not worth the effort

If you have thoughts about hurting yourself, call your doctor immediately.

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What treatments are available?

Many people who have depression improve when they receive appropriate treatment. Your doctor may suggest medication, therapy, or a combination of the two. No depression treatment works instantly. Watch for gradual improvements and don't push yourself too much.

- **Antidepressants.** Your doctor may want to prescribe an antidepressant for you. This type of medication can help balance your body chemistry and relieve the physical cause of depression. Your doctor may want you to try a few different antidepressants to find the one that works best with your unique body chemistry. Antidepressants may not work right away. Most people start to feel better just a few weeks after starting antidepressants, but in some cases it may take a few months to get the full results. Do not stop taking your medication if you start to feel better. Your doctor will want to take you off your medication slowly and gradually, and only when your body is ready for it.
- **Therapy.** Talking to a therapist or counselor can help you understand the root of your depression. Your therapist can help you look at and change negative thought patterns. A counselor can also work with you to design a plan to help manage your depression.

How can you help manage your depression?

In addition to medication or counseling, you can do a lot on your own to start feeling better.

- **Stay social.** Spend time with friends who make you laugh and feel good about yourself. Talking about your experience with a support group can also help.
- **Schedule some fun.** Even though it can be hard to get out there at first, getting back to the activities you used to love can improve your mood. Give some a try even if you think you may not be up to it at first.
- **Stay mindful and positive.** Break your negative thought patterns by replacing those thoughts with positive statements.
- **Try some stress-busters.** Taking a little time to manage your stress each day can do you a world of good. You might try meditation, drawing, or listening to music. Even just making sure you get eight hours of sleep at night can help you feel better.
- **Get moving.** Just half an hour of light exercise every day can help you feel more energetic, boost your mood, and reduce stress.
- **Stay away from alcohol and drugs.** Self-medicating in this way can often make depression worse.
- **Eat healthy.** Nurture and nourish yourself by eating regular well-rounded meals, starting with breakfast.

Learn more

Visit kp.org/depression for more mood-improving tactics.

Stress Management

Stress is what you feel when you have to handle more than you are used to. When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in danger. It makes hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and give you a burst of energy. This is called the fight-or-flight stress response.

How can you avoid stress?

Stress is a fact of life for most people. You may not be able to get rid of stress, but you can look for ways to lower it.

You might try some of these ideas:

- **Learn better ways to manage your time.** You may get more done with less stress if you make a schedule. Think about which things are most important, and do those first.
- **Find better ways to cope.** Look at how you have been dealing with stress. Be honest about what works and what does not. Think about other things that might work better.
- **Take good care of yourself.** Get plenty of rest. Eat well. Don't smoke. Limit how much alcohol you drink.
- **Try out new ways of thinking.** When you find yourself starting to worry, try to stop the thoughts. Work on letting go of things you cannot change. Learn to say "no."
- **Speak up.** Not being able to talk about your needs and concerns creates stress and can make negative feelings worse. Assertive communication can help you express how you feel in a thoughtful, tactful way.
- **Ask for help.** People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better.
- **Sometimes stress is just too much to handle alone.** Talking to a friend or family member may help, but you may also want to see a counselor.

How can you relieve stress?

You will feel better if you can find ways to get stress out of your system. The best ways to relieve stress are different for each person. Try some of these ideas to see which ones work for you:

- **Exercise.** Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress. Walking is a great way to get started.
- **Write.** It can help to write about the things that are bothering you.
- **Let your feelings out.** Talk, laugh, cry, and express anger when you need to with someone you trust.
- **Do something you enjoy.** A hobby can help you relax. Volunteer work or work that helps others can be a great stress reliever.
- **Learn ways to relax your body.** This can include breathing exercises, muscle relaxation exercises, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, or relaxing exercises like tai chi and qi gong.
- **Focus on the present.** Try meditation, imagery exercises, or self-hypnosis. Listen to relaxing music. Try to look for the humor in life. Laughter really can be the best medicine.

Kaiser Permanente Resources

Resources for Members and Nonmembers:

Stress can have a serious impact on health, and has been connected to several conditions and diseases including blood pressure, chronic pain, and a compromised immune system. For more information visit kp.org.

Online health management tools for members:

Use these personalized online health improvement programs to assess your habits and learn ways to improve your health.

- HealthMedia® Succeed™ for a total health assessment
- HealthMedia® Relax™ for stress reduction

Health Stress

Managing long-term health problems compounds the disease itself. Learn more about chronic conditions with the online HealthMedia®Care for Your Health™ for managing ongoing health conditions or take an in-person Living with Disease class.

Work Stress

Contact your Healthworks consultant or call **303-614-1101** to schedule an onsite class. Choose from a variety of classes including Managing Stress at Work and Six Things That Matter Most.

State and National Resources

- American Institute of Stress - stress.org
- American Psychological Association-apa.org/depression



Health Education and Webinars DECEMBER 2011

Get support to live healthy by attending one of our FREE online classes. View the class through your Web browser and interact with your presenter.

Fees: Free (members & nonmembers). You'll need to give your e-mail address.

To view all scheduled class times and register for webinars go to: kpwebinar.org. Recorded webinars are also available.

Becoming A Love and Logic Parent, A "How-To" Review	Are you a becoming a Love and Logic Parent "graduate"? If you've taken a class or read a Love and Logic book, share your successes and challenges, clarify the skills, and get practical support from a Becoming a Love and Logic Parent facilitator. Dates/Times: December 5, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Break Free for Life: Quit Smoking Webinar	Kick start your quit effort with this online class and leave with a personal quit plan designed for your success. Class includes an overview of medication options. Dates/Times: December 14, 6-7 p.m.
Celiac Disease and Going Gluten-Free	Join a registered dietitian to learn what it means to have celiac disease and how to optimize your health with a gluten-free diet. Date/Times: December 13, 12-1 p.m.
Cholesterol: Taking Control Webinar	Learn to make smart food choices to lower your cholesterol and include the foods you love in a healthy diet. Taught by a Registered Dietitian. Dates/Times: December 20, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
Diabetes: Learn to Take Charge	Join a Diabetes Health Coach in this fact-filled meeting where you will learn how to manage Type 2 Diabetes and set goals to improve your quality of life. This is an online version of our "Diabetes Basics" class which is taught by a Registered Nurse and a Registered Dietitian. Dates/Times: November 3 - December 1, 12-1 p.m.
Getting to the "Heart and Sole" of Health	This class is a core component of cardiac/vascular health. Join us for an interactive session covering coronary and peripheral artery disease risk factor reduction, symptom recognition, common medications, nutrition basics, exercise and stress management. Date/Times: December 1, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Preventing Diabetes and Heart Disease: Lifestyle Approaches	Join a Kaiser Permanente registered dietitian in a one-hour version of our preventing diabetes and heart disease class. If you have pre-diabetes or are at risk for diabetes, heart attack, or stroke due to high blood pressure or other factors, this class is for you. Dates/Times: December 28, 4-5 p.m.
Weight Loss, Weighing the Options	Want to lose weight? Learn how to live a healthier life and lose weight. Taught by a Registered Dietitian. Dates/Times: December 13, 12-1 p.m.