



How lifestyle changes can help ease your depression

Making lifestyle changes is not easy for anyone. And breaking bad habits or adding new activities to your daily routine can be even harder if you are dealing with depression. But the effort may be worth it.

Getting started

- Start out slowly. You might start with just one lifestyle change at first.
- Set realistic goals. Set goals that will help you improve. Do not set goals that feel like a burden.
- Pick a lifestyle change that is appealing. You have a better chance of sticking with a plan if you enjoy that activity.
- Keep at it! The results you want may not happen right away. But if you stick with it, the activities you choose will become more enjoyable. Over time, this will help you feel and function better.

Try these lifestyle changes

- **Exercise.** Exercise helps to improve your mood. It also helps you sleep better. Doing something as simple as taking a walk can help. (Just make sure to ask your provider if you are healthy enough to exercise first.)
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Certain foods may give you more energy. Others may ease digestion problems. Eating well can also help you lose extra pounds. It can boost your immune system too.
- **Avoid alcohol and drugs.** Using alcohol and drugs may seem to help depression. But they can make it worse. If you are taking an antidepressant and using alcohol and drugs, it may be a dangerous. Ask your provider for help if you use alcohol or drugs and cannot stop.
- **Stay connected.** It is important to interact with other people. Even when you do not feel like it. This will help you avoid becoming isolated. If you cannot bring yourself to be with people, stay connected to the world around you in other ways. Go to the library or to the movies. Walk around a shopping center. This may not be easy at first. But getting out may help bring purpose and pleasure back into your life.
- **Develop a routine.** Depression affects many parts of your life. This includes routine things such as sleeping and eating. Doing routine activities at the same time every day helps you get back to normal. This may improve how you function.

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