



# Beat the Blues: An Overview of Depression



Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

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Always speak with your doctor before starting an exercise program or diet.

If you have any questions or concerns about your health or the health of any of your family members, consult your doctor.

There may be therapies and programs described here that are not covered benefits. Check your benefit plan or contact your benefit administrator for coverage details.

# Agenda

- 1 Overview
- 2 Symptoms of depression
- 3 Differences in views between men and women
- 4 Treatment options
- 5 Tips for Fighting Stigma
- 5 Resources and Your Questions

# What Is Depression?

- A serious medical condition
- Can interfere with daily life
- Can interfere with relationships
- Can affect how one thinks, feels and behaves
- Often requires treatment



# Risk Factors

Abusing alcohol or illicit drugs	Having a serious illness
Being a woman	Having few friends or personal relationships
Experiencing stressful life events, such as the death of a loved one	Having low self-esteem
Having a chronic illness	Having recently given birth
Having a history of depression	Taking certain medications
Having a relative with depression	Traumatic childhood experience

# Depression Symptoms

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Unexplained backaches and headaches
- Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Aches or pains, cramps or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment
- Crying spells for no apparent reason
- Feeling frustrated over small matters

# Depression Differences by Gender

Men	Women
Common contributing factors: Life changes such as retirement, loss of job, loss of spouse or friends, physical health.	Common contributing factors: Hormonal fluctuations that occur during a woman's life such as in puberty, menstruation, pregnancy and menopause.
Treatment: Feel a stigma about seeking treatment, have a tendency to hide feelings	Treatment: Twice as likely as men to be depressed, but more likely to get help
Common symptoms: Tiredness, irritability, aggression, hostility	Common symptoms: Anxiety, ongoing sadness, loss of interest of activities once enjoyed, fatigue, changes in appetite
Preferred method of self-medication: Alcohol and illicit drug abuse and engaging in risky behaviors	Preferred method of self-medication: Alcohol abuse and disordered eating
Suicide risk: 75-80% of suicides in the U.S. are men.	Suicide risk: More women attempt suicide.

# Getting Help

- Speak with your doctor or mental health specialist.
- Certain medications and some medical conditions, such as viruses or a thyroid disorder, can cause the same symptoms as depression. These can be ruled out by having a physical exam, interviews and lab tests.
- If underlying medical conditions are ruled out, a referral may be made to a mental health professional.





# Managing Depression

- Early medical diagnosis and treatment may help reduce the intensity and duration of depression symptoms.
  - It will also reduce the likelihood of a relapse.
- If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of depression, seek your health care professional's advice for treatment or referral to a mental health professional.



# Treatment Options

- Psychotherapy
- Medication
- Alternative therapies
- Diet
- Exercise

*Always discuss depression management options with your doctor or other health care professional.*



# Treatment Options:

- Also called “talk therapy”
- Two main types:
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Interpersonal Therapy



# Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- Helps to change negative thought patterns.
- Helps people interpret their environment and interactions with others in a positive and realistic way
- Helps to recognize things that contribute to depression and helps the person change behaviors that may be making the depression worse.



# Changing Negative Thinking

Negative Thinking	Positive Thinking
"I can't do this."	"I'll do the best I can."
"Everything is going wrong."	"I can do this if I take one step at a time."
"I hate when this happens."	"I know how to deal with this. I've done this before."
"I'm so stupid."	"I learn from my mistakes."
"Everything is going wrong."	"Someday I'll laugh about this."



# Interpersonal Therapy

Helps people understand and work through troubled relationships that may cause their depression or make it worse.



# Medication

- Must be taken 4 to 6 weeks before they have a full effect.
- Do not stop taking your medication unless you are advised to do so by your doctor.
- Medications affect people in different ways.
- Sometimes more than one medication as needed.
- Working with your doctor is key!

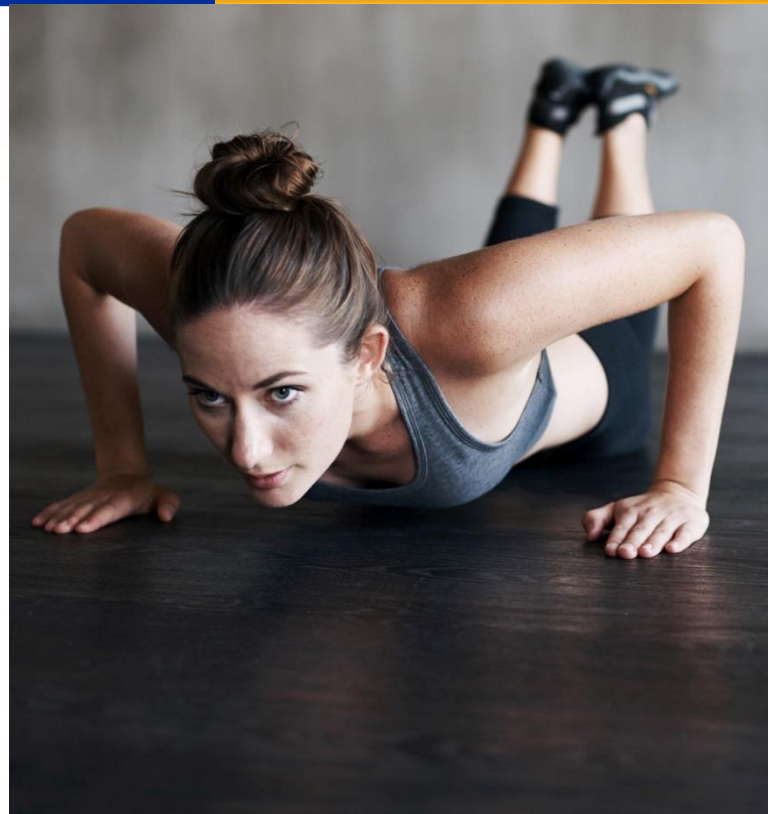


# Alternative Therapies<sup>1</sup>

- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Chiropractic treatments
- Guided imagery
- Hypnosis
- Massage therapy
- Meditation
- Relaxation
- Yoga

<sup>1</sup>Not all alternative therapies described here are covered benefits under Horizon BCBSNJ plans. Check your benefits plan for coverage details.

Source: WebMD®





# Diet

- Eat a diet high in nutrients.
- Fill your plate with essential antioxidants.
- Eat “smart” carbohydrates.
- Eat protein-rich foods.
- Make sure you are getting a sufficient amount of vitamin D.
- Include omega-3 fatty acids.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine.
- Stay at a healthy weight – watch portion sizes.

*Always speak with your doctor or other health care professional before beginning a new diet.*

Source: WebMD®



# Exercise

Regular exercise has been proven to:

- Help reduce stress
- Ward off anxiety and feelings of depression
- Boost self esteem
- Improve sleep

*Always speak with your doctor or other health care professional before beginning a new exercise regimen.*



# Getting the Most out of Treatment

- Develop good habits.
- Monitor your mood.
- Strengthen your support system.
- Maintain regular sleep habits.
- See a depression expert.
- Take medications as prescribed.
- Don't ignore side effects.
- Never stop taking your depression medication without your doctor's permission.
- Don't assume that you can stop taking your depression medicine when you feel better.



# Managing Stress

- Do some deep breathing and practice mindfulness.
- Embrace the power of “no” (e.g., reduce your obligations)
- Get support from friends or consider joining a support group.
- Keep a gratitude journal where you regularly write down what you are thankful for.
- Laugh out loud.
- Organize your time.
- Set priorities and realistic goals.
- Take time out for yourself (e.g., do something you enjoy); practice self care (e.g., diet, exercise and sleep).
- Think positive.

Remember: nobody is perfect!

# Tips for Fighting Stigma

- **Talk Openly About Mental Health** – you can use your own personal stories, or discuss news items to foster open conversations.
- **Educate Yourself And Others** – Use jokes or insults about mental illness, as teachable moments
- **Be Conscious Of Language** – avoid word like “crazy” or “shrink”
- **Encourage Equality Between Physical And Mental Illness**
- Remind people that they wouldn't make fun of someone with diabetes, heart disease or cancer
- **Be Honest About Treatment**
- Of course, what you choose to share about any health condition is up to you, but if people can say they have an appointment with primary care doctor without fear of being judged, this should apply to mental health professionals as well.

# If Battling Mental Health Issues

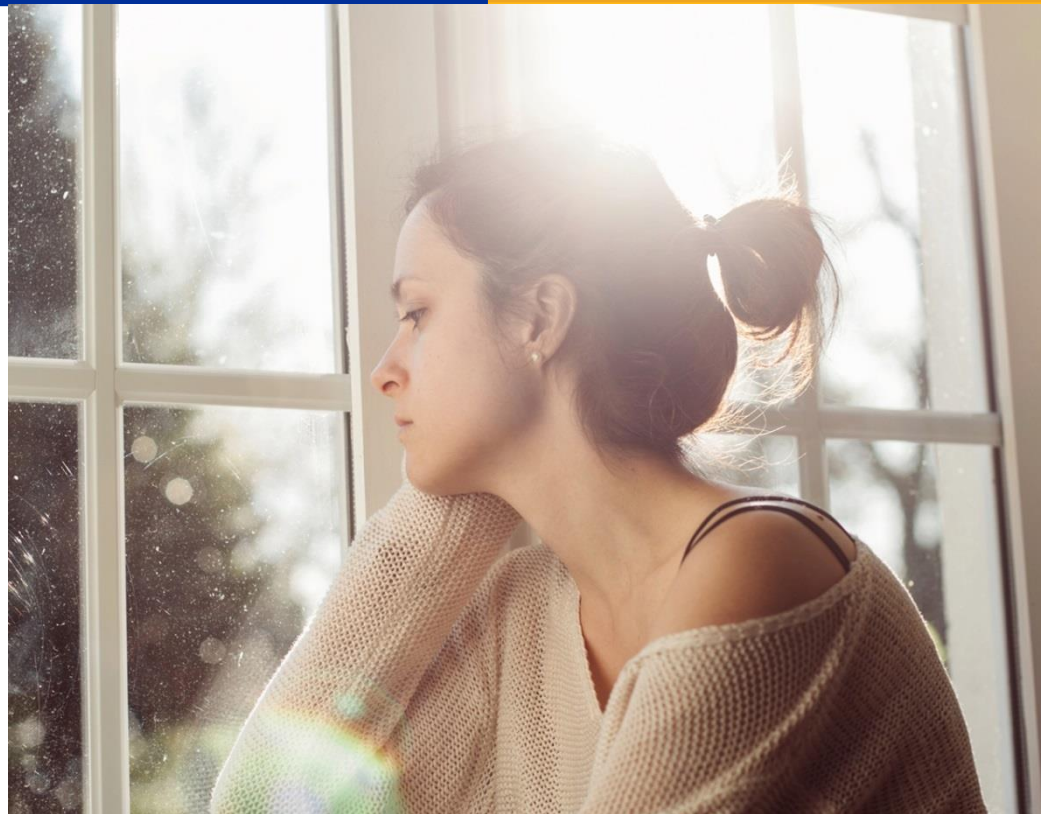
- **You are not alone:** 20% - 25% of Americans have an episode of major depression at least once in their lives, and that doesn't include other mental-health diagnoses.
- **Remember that treatment works:** Prescription medications and talk therapy successfully help many individuals with mental illness enjoy productive lives.
- **Be patient and encouraging to loved ones seeking help:** Mental health treatment can be time consuming, and involves trial and error with medications, side effects, and possibly new behaviors and thought processes.
- **Remain active and surrounding yourself with supportive people:** Fear of stigma and judgment may tempt you to stay home and avoid others, but isolating yourself and avoiding activities you enjoy can exacerbate your illness.



# Do You Have Depression?

If you're concerned about whether you may be depressed, take WebMD's [Depression Assessment](#). You can also encourage a friend or loved one to do the same.

- This assessment cannot diagnose depression, but it can evaluate one's mood to indicate if someone should seek treatment.



# Horizon Behavioral Health

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey's Behavioral Health program is committed to providing our members with access to safe and effective care. The Horizon Behavioral Health program helps ensure medical and behavioral health services are integrated to help patients better manage all aspects of their health.

## How members get help

To access behavioral health or substance use disorder benefits, members can visit Horizon Behavioral Health 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Members can also call the designated phone number on the back of their member ID cards or one of the following numbers:

Members: 1-800-626-2212

SHBP/SEHBP Members: 1-800-991-5579

*Not all programs are available to all Horizon BCBSNJ members. Please check with your benefits administrator to determine if you are eligible for these programs.*



# Chronic Care and Case

Horizon BCBSNJ Chronic Care Program: Registered nurses provide information and support for members who have asthma, diabetes, coronary artery disease, heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and kidney disease. Call 1-888-334-9006.

Horizon BCBSNJ Case Management:

Registered nurses provide information and support for acute and complex medical conditions. Call 1-888-621-5894.

24/7 Nurse Line: Speak to a nurse at anytime at 1-888-624-3096. SHBP members call 1-866-901-7477.

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# *My Health Manager*

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey's My Health Manager, powered by WebMD®, is a personalized, secure and confidential online tool that can empower you to better manage your health. *My Health Manager* is available through Member Online Services.

On *My Health Manager* you'll find the following tools:

- Health Assessment: This interactive, easy-to-use measurement of your personal health status uses your responses to identify health risk factors.
- Symptom Checker: Not feeling well? By answering a few simple questions, you can view potential causes and treatments.
- Online Health Record: Store your health information in a central location.
- Digital Coaching: These programs that can help you set a wellness goal and reach it.



You know what it takes to keep your mind and body happy — so let our Blue365 discount program help you save money on those services and items. We have exclusive deals open only to Blue members. It's just another way you can benefit from being a Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey member.

Visit [HorizonBlue.com/blue365](https://HorizonBlue.com/blue365) to learn more.

# Sources

- American Heart Association: [heart.org](https://heart.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov)
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): [nimh.nih.gov](https://nimh.nih.gov)
- WebMD: [webmd.com](https://webmd.com)



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Spanish (Español): Para ayuda en español, llame al 1-855-477-AZUL (2985).

Chinese (中文): 如需中文協助, 請致電 1-800-355-BLUE (2583)。

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