



Major depressive disorder

UniCare Health Plan of West Virginia Inc. (UniCare) has a care management program for depression. This program will help you better understand and manage your depression. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your lifestyle. You do not have to join the program. You are enrolled as a member of UniCare.

Living with depression

Everyone feels blue or sad some of the time, but these feelings don't last very long. Most times they go away in a few days. When a person has depression, it can get in the way of everyday life.

We want you to know you can take control.

If you like, we will keep your provider informed of your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better manage your depression.

Things to know:

- There are many causes of depression
- Sometimes people have depression for no reason at all
- Common symptoms of depression include sadness, anxious feelings that don't go away, feelings of hopelessness, guilt or helplessness, trouble concentrating, and even thoughts of suicide
- The important thing to know about depression is that depression can be treated
- Your provider may do lab tests to see how well your medication is working
- We can share more information to help you manage your depression

How is depression treated?

- The first step to treating depression is to see a health care provider.
- People with depression may have other health conditions. Be sure to talk with your provider about all of your health conditions. If no physical cause for depression is found, your provider may do a screening for depression.
- A screening for depression can also be done by a social worker, psychologist or a psychiatrist.
- During your visit be sure to write down what you have been told is your diagnosis. List all prescribed treatments and medications.
- Treatment for depression is different for each person. Treatment often includes medication and some kind of talk therapy or counseling.

What you should know about antidepressant medications:

- If you are taking antidepressant medications, do not drive until you know how your medication is going to make you feel.



- Some common side effects are dry mouth, dizziness, headache, nausea and blurred vision. You may have other side effects.
- People have different responses to medications. Talk to your provider before taking new medications. These include medications that do not need a prescription.
- Talk to your provider about any concerns you have about your medications. Your provider can help find a medication that has the fewest side effects and will work for you.
- Medication for depression only works if taken daily as ordered by a provider. It can take weeks for these types of medications to take effect.
- It is very important to take the medication even if you are feeling better.
- Always follow your provider's advice about how much medication to take and how often to take it.
- Talk with your provider before stopping medications.
- We can teach you how to take your medications correctly.
- We can help you understand how your medications work.

How can family and friends help?

Family and friends play an important part in helping a person who has depression. They will need to know as much as possible about depression. Family and friends also can help you to take your medications correctly.

To help someone with depression, a friend or relative can:

- Offer support and understanding about the depression.
- Encourage the person to stay in treatment.
- Talk with the person and listen to what he or she has to say.
- Never ignore comments about suicide and let the person's therapist or doctor know right away.
- Family members may benefit from attending counseling together.
- Invite the person out for walks, outings and other activities. Keep trying if he or she says no. But don't push him or her to take on too much too soon.
- Remind the person that, with time and treatment, the depression will lift.

What can you do?

If you are depressed, remember these feelings are part of your condition. Here are a few things you can do to help with your treatment:

- Talk to your provider about your treatment. Keep a daily diary. It can help remind you of the changes you have made.
- Do mild activity or exercise. Go to a movie, a ballgame or another event or activity that you once enjoyed. Take part in religious, social or other activities.
- Set goals for yourself that are reachable.



- Break up large tasks into small ones. Set some priorities and do what you can as you can.
- Try to spend time with other people. Talk to a trusted friend or relative. Try not to be alone. Let others help you.
- Your mood should improve over time, not right away. Do not expect to feel better right away.
- Wait to make big decisions like getting married, divorced or changing jobs until you feel better.
- Remember that positive thinking will replace negative thoughts as you respond to treatment.
- Keep a daily routine. Eat a healthy diet and sleep at regular times. Make sure you get enough sleep.

Support to help you manage your depression

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your depression
- We can help you find community programs and resources in your area
- Tips to talk with your provider and get the most out of your visit:
 1. Ask any questions you may have about your depression. You can write them down and take them with you to your visit.
 2. Follow your provider's advice – if you have questions or concerns, let your doctor know.
 3. Make sure your provider knows what medicines you are taking.

Important screenings:

- Other health conditions
- Preventive care screenings such as wellness checkups, mammograms and Pap tests

If you feel like you want to hurt yourself:

Get help right away! You can call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889) to talk to a trained counselor. Friends or family should call the treating psychiatrist or therapist or 911 if a person with depression talks about or tries suicide.

For more helpful information on managing your depression:

- [The National Institute of Mental Health](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) 1-866-615-6464 (TTY: 1-866-415-8051)
- [Mental Health America](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net) 1-800-969-NMHA (6642)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](http://www.nami.org) 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
- Community Mental Health Centers
- Peer support groups
- Online support groups



Sources:

* The National Institute of Mental Health
(NIMH) Depression

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>, accessed November 8, 2013.

* National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

What is Depression

<http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=Depression>, accessed November 8, 2013.

* Publication:

Depression

National Institute of Mental Health U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES • National Institutes of Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression/index.shtml>

*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely>, accessed November 8, 2013.

We can translate this for you at no cost.

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