

## Help and Information print document



### Treatments

Treatment for depression can involve a variety of different approaches, and often people find that a combination of these work best. For more information about self-help options such as attending a self-help group, making changes to your diet or relaxation techniques please contact Depression Alliance to ask for an information leaflet.

When talking to your doctor about the most appropriate treatment for you, it's often useful to have a basic understanding of the options.

Antidepressants work by normalising the activity levels of brain chemicals which affect our mood. Current medical advice is that antidepressants are not addictive. There are several different types of antidepressant treatment available. Following is a general overview:

#### **Tricyclic Antidepressants (TCAs)**

First available in the 1950s, TCAs are still commonly used to treat depression. They take up to about two weeks to work. Some tricyclic antidepressants are also sedatives – so if you feel anxious and agitated you may be prescribed these. If you feel tired however then you will probably be prescribed a non-sedative type. Some patients experience troublesome side effects with tricyclics.

#### **Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)**

Introduced in the 1980s, SSRIs are the other major type of antidepressant. They tend to cause less side effects, and are less sedative than other types. Many patients find SSRIs easier to take than other types of antidepressant.

#### **Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)**

MAOIs are generally used in patients who have not responded to other treatments. They are not often used as a first line treatment due to the special diet patients are required to follow whilst taking them.

#### **Reversible Inhibitors of Monoamine Oxidase (RIMAs)**

RIMAs are a similar antidepressant drug treatment to MAOIs. They are usually prescribed in higher doses for those patients who have not responded to other treatments.

There are also a number of other antidepressants that don't 'belong' to these four main classes.

Most side effects from antidepressant drugs usually cease after about three weeks. Please don't stop taking the medication or changing your dosage without talking to your doctor first. Remember, there are a wide variety of different antidepressant medications available. Your GP will be able to prescribe you a different antidepressant if you are experiencing unpleasant side effects. Finally, remember not to give up on your medication too soon! It may take up to six weeks to work properly. Sleeping problems and feelings of tiredness are usually the first symptoms to improve, the depressed mood may take a little longer to lift.

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It is important that you talk to your GP before stopping or changing your medication in any way. Remember that even when you feel better, your doctor may ask you to continue taking your medication for a while – this is just to make sure that the depression does not return.

### **Talking Treatments**

Although medication can help lift your mood, it does not tackle any underlying problems you may be experiencing. Psychological therapies can help to explore what may have contributed to your depression in the first place, and what might be keeping you depressed.

There are lots of different psychological therapies. None have been proven to be 'better' than any other, and so it is more a question of finding a therapy, and therapist, which suits you. Your GP may be able to advise you, and also let you know which therapies are available in your area. All sorts of therapies are available on the NHS, but be prepared for waiting lists. If you decide to choose private therapy, make sure that you select a registered or accredited therapist.

The most common kinds of psychological therapies are:

### **Cognitive Therapy**

How you think largely determines how you feel; when you are depressed, you feel very negative. Cognitive Therapy works by challenging these negative thought patterns, and suggesting changes to destructive behaviour.

### **Interpersonal therapy**

This focuses on your relationships with other people. It teaches you how to communicate more effectively and improve your view of yourself.

### **Psychodynamic Therapy**

This helps people to understand past conflicts, release aggression and reduce feelings of guilt or inadequacy.

### **Counselling**

The term refers to a wide range of techniques and approaches, some of which draw from the above therapies. As a general rule, counselling offers people the opportunity to talk through issues in their everyday lives that may be contributing towards their depression, rather than aiming to treat more deep-rooted problems.

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### Other Treatments

Complementary, or 'alternative' treatments can support or even in some cases replace conventional treatments for depression. Research on acupuncture, herbal medicines (including St John's Wort), and aromatherapy for example suggests that these treatments can help to reduce anxiety and to alleviate mild depression. You should always talk to your GP before opting for a complementary treatment.

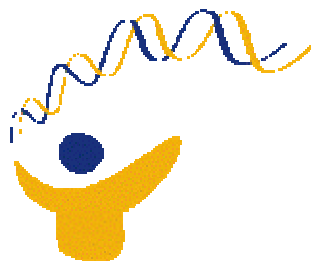
Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) is very occasionally offered to people with severe depression, usually if other treatments are found to be either unsuitable or unhelpful. Ask your GP for more information about this treatment.<sup>3</sup> Things to Remember about Treatments for Depression

Treatment for depression can involve a variety of different approaches; these could include antidepressant medication, psychological therapy, or self-help options. Often people find that a combination of these work best.

Antidepressants work by normalising the activity levels of certain chemicals in the brain. They are not addictive! To maximise their effectiveness you should take them exactly as they are prescribed.

Psychological therapies can help you to explore any underlying problems that may have contributed to your depression. There are lots of different kinds of therapy, the most common of which are cognitive therapy, interpersonal therapy, and psychodynamic therapy.

### ADVERTISEMENT FOR RESEARCH STUDY



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GENDEP is a study looking at how genetic information can be used to help doctors choose the right antidepressant for each person.

We are looking for people with depression, living in London, to take part in this study.

If you take part, then you will have an initial assessment, and then start taking one of the study's antidepressant medication.

You will be closely followed for up to 12 weeks with weekly phone calls. At the end of the three months you will receive a review.

Do you have depression?

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Do you know someone who needs antidepressant medication?

Would you be willing to travel to South London for a psychiatric assessment?

All travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Call us or visit our website for more information – with no obligation to take part in the study.

*This study is funded by the European Union, and based at the Institute of Psychiatry, which is part of King's College London.*



**DepressionAlliance**

[www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)