

## **Ten Tips for Managing Depression Yourself**

Depression is such a cruel illness. The very actions that can help you feel better are things you have no energy or desire to do. You feel overwhelmed, hopeless, and you seriously doubt that you will ever feel better again. However, even doing one small thing can improve your mood. Some of the tips below are a one-time, simple step, like reaching out to connect with someone. Others, like cutting down on refined sugars, will take time as you build that habit.

Keep in mind, though, that most of these tips you can do on your own to help manage mild to moderate depression. Many, if not most of us with depression, also require the help of a doctor, therapist, and/or medication. Please use these tips in addition to the treatment you are already receiving. If you haven't sought treatment, it may be beneficial to do so.

**1. Get enough sleep.** Studies show that lack of sleep not only causes some of the same symptoms as depression (tiredness, lack of energy, irritability), but can actually be a factor in causing depression. It's a catch-22, because lack of sleep causes depression, and depression can cause insomnia, but do what you can to get 7-9 hours of sleep a night.

**2. Get physically active.** Start small if you have to, but get some exercise. Take a 10-minute walk, ride your bike, jump rope for five minutes. Even a little bit will improve your mood and give you a sense of accomplishment. Exercise has been shown in many cases to be just as effective as antidepressants, so give it a try! Exercise provides a myriad of benefits, so consider it an Rx from your doctor!

**3. Cut down on refined sugars.** Carbohydrates temporarily boost serotonin levels, so it's only natural that when your serotonin levels are down, you crave sugary foods. However, the payoff just isn't there. Eventually, you crash and then just crave more sugar. Cutting the sugars out and adding in fruits and vegetables is better for you in the long run.

**4. Reach out to someone.** When depressed, the last thing you want to do is go out or call someone on the phone. But the simple act of talking or socializing with someone else can help your mood.

**5. Get proper nutrition.** It's best to get nutrition through food by eating meals that include a variety of fruits and vegetables, but at the very least, take a multi-vitamin if you need to.

**6. Get your omega-3 fatty acids.** Omega-3 fatty acids are good for the brain. Most of us don't eat enough fish, and a lot of the fish these days are too loaded with mercury to make them healthy. Choose fish or an omega-3 fatty acid supplement carefully, but do find a way to get more of it into your diet.

**7. Go outside.** Sunlight, especially in the morning, can lift your mood. Also, being

outside helps you connect with the natural world, which is a mood booster as well.

**8. Try yoga.** Recent studies reveal that yoga is effective for reducing depression. Taking a yoga class will also get you out of the house and socializing, but if you're not up to that, there are plenty of DVDs that can help you get started. Check your local library -- you may be able to try a DVD out before you invest in it.

**9. Meditate or pray.** Meditation helps you relax and focus on your breathing. Praying has also been shown to help.

**10. Seek professional help if needed.** There are times when managing depression means seeking help. If you are unable to manage your depression on your own or are experiencing more depressed days than not, it's OK to use the resources out there. Check with your regular doctor or a psychiatrist for possible medication options. Seek out a counselor or therapist for talking it out and learning new skills.

The tips listed above are very beneficial, but don't be discouraged if your depression doesn't immediately lift -- it may take a little time to notice the effects. Managing depression is not easy, but there are resources out there to help. And most of all, know that you are not alone in your efforts.