

DEPRESSION

TREATMENT OPTIONS



There are many ways to recover from depression, and options on the list below are known to work better than a sugar pill and bring about positive changes in the brain.

The first step in choosing a treatment is to identify the cause of the depression. While the treatments here work well for major depression, they may not work well for depressions caused by something else (such as bipolar, OCD, trauma, addiction or medical illness).

LIFESTYLE

WALKING

Walking briskly 30 minutes a day causes similar changes in the brain as antidepressants. Swimming, dancing and other aerobic activity will have the same effect, and three 10-minute chunks works equally well.

ACTIVITY

Regular activity daily activity is essential to overcoming depression. A mix of social, enjoyable, and goal-directed activity is important. Start light so it's not overwhelming; more ideas at www.moodtreatmentcenter.com/activation.htm

MINDFULNESS

This form of mental training can treat depression and change the brain when practiced daily. A free audio guide is on our website, and we also offer group and individual education in mindfulness: www.moodtreatmentcenter.com/mindfulness.htm
www.moodtreatmentcenter.com

MEDICINES

BUPROPRION (wellbutrin)

Benefits: treat depression, improves concentration, reduces nicotine cravings; also treats anxiety when it is due to depression.

Risks: side effects are rare (e.g. tremor, headache). Does not impact weight or sex drive.

SEROTONIN AND DUAL AGENTS

Benefits: treat depression and anxiety. Dual agents, which impact serotonin and norepinephrine, have additional benefits in chronic pain.

Risks: lower sex-drive, disrupted sleep, nausea.

Examples: fluoxetine (prozac), sertraline (zoloft), citalopram (celexa), escitalopram (lexapro), paroxetine (paxil), fluvoxamine (luvox), vortioxetine (brintellix), vilazodone (viibryd).

Dual agents (SNRIs): venlafaxine (effexor), desvenlafaxine (pristiq), duloxetine (cymbalta), milnacipran (savella)

MAOIs

Benefits: can work when other medicines haven't; especially good for atypical depression (with fatigue, high appetite, and a reactive mood).

Risks: older versions have many side effects and require a special diet to avoid dangerous elevations of blood pressure. The newer version (selegiline) is well-tolerated and only has dietary restrictions in higher-doses.

Examples: selegiline (emsam), tranylcypromine (parnate), isocarboxazid (marplan), phenelzine (nardil)

MIRTAZAPINE (remeron)

Benefits: treats depression, anxiety, insomnia and can work when other medicines haven't. It can also reverse the side effects of serotonin medicines.

Risks: weight gain, grogginess. No sexual side effects.

TRICYCLICS

Benefits: treat depression, anxiety, chronic pain and insomnia. Can work when other medicines haven't.

Risks: numerous side effects including low blood pressure, heart arrhythmias, constipation, drowsiness, concentration problems, sexual difficulties.

Examples: amitriptyline (elavil), clomipramine (anafranil), doxepin (sinequan), imipramine (tofranil), nortriptyline (pamelor), protriptyline (vivactil), trimipramine (sumontil), desipramine (norpramin). Tetracyclic versions: maprotiline, amoxapine.

DOPAMINE AGENTS

Examples: pramipexole (possibly ropinorole, rotigotine)

Benefits: treat depression, restless legs. No sexual side effects or weight gain.

Risks: nausea, drowsiness, compulsive behavior.

NOVEL STIMULANTS

Examples: modafinil, armodafinil

Benefits: work quickly for depression, fatigue, concentration.

Risks: anxiety, headache, insomnia.

ATYPICALS

Examples: Aripiprazole (abilify), quetiapine (seroquel), olanzapine (zyprexa).

Benefits: helps antidepressants work better.

Risks: weight gain, drowsiness, restlessness, diabetes, high cholesterol, tardive dyskinesia (permanent muscle twitching).

LITHIUM

Benefits: helps antidepressants work better; prevents suicide; strengthens brain cells. Well tolerated in lower doses (for depression).

Risks: nausea, tremor, thirst, low thyroid, kidney problems.

OTHER

Meds which may work (limited evidence):

Memantine, riluzole, thyroid supplementation, pindolol, cyproheptadine (similar to mirtazapine), amantadine, buspirone with melatonin, statins (lovastatin, atorvastatin).

Meds which work but cause significant drowsiness:

Nefazodone, trazodone

NATURAL

VERY EFFECTIVE

These work as well as antidepressants:

SAME: the main methyl donor in the body

Lightbox: used for 30 minutes in the morning, works for winter and possibly non-winter depression, costs around \$150.

L-methylfolate: a prescription-grade folic acid, can work when combined with antidepressants, available as brands (deplin, cerefolin, enlyte).

MILDLY EFFECTIVE

These work better than placebo but mild benefits:

Omega-3 (fish oil), chromium, vitamin B, folate, Saint Johns Wort, rhodiola rosea, chamomile tablets, creatine.

DEVICES & PROCEDURES

MEDICAL

Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), ketamine infusion (experimental), vagal nerve stimulation (a surgical device).

NON-MEDICAL

Wake therapy (a behavior therapy involving sleep deprivation), lightbox and air ionizer (a bedroom device, www.cet.org).

THERAPY

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

Depression can influence your thoughts and actions, and this therapy helps people break free from those patterns. Clients use journaling to identify and question their depressive thoughts.

www.beckinstitute.org/cognitive-behavioral-therapy

INTERPERSONAL THERAPY

This therapy helps people resolve life changes that contribute to depression, such as grief, conflicts, new roles/transitions, and social isolation.

www.interpersonalpsychotherapy.org

ACCEPTANCE & COMMITMENT

Depression can make people lose sight of the values that matter most to them. This therapy helps people get back in touch with those goals and move beyond the inner struggles of depression and anxiety.

www.contextualscience.org/free_videos

CBASP THERAPY

Cognitive Behavioral Analysis System of Psychotherapy (or CBASP) was developed for depressions that have been long-standing. It helps people navigate the complex ways that depression impacts relationships.

www.cbasp.org

SUPPORT GROUPS

Several local groups meet regularly to share information and support on living with depression. The Mental Health Association keeps a listing of meeting times:

www.triadmentalhealth.org