

Cancer and Depression

It is normal to grieve over the changes that cancer brings to a person's life. A certain amount of depression, including sadness and grief, is common when you are coping with cancer.

Physical problems such as fatigue, poor appetite, and sleep changes can be signs of depression or side effects of cancer treatment. Side effects may continue after cancer treatment has ended. Talk to your doctor if you have these physical symptoms.

You should seek help if you have depressed feelings each day that last for more than 2 weeks or get in the way of your day-to-day activities. Treatments for depression may include medicine, counseling, or a combination of both.

Signs of clinical depression may include the following. **If you have any of these signs for more than 2 weeks**, you should see your doctor.

- Sad or “empty” feeling almost every day for most of the day
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities that you once enjoyed
- Eating problems, including weight loss or gain
- Sleep changes (unable to sleep or sleeping too much)
- Fatigue or decreased energy almost every day
- You seem restless to others almost every day
- You seem “slowed down” to others almost every day
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and helplessness
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Wide mood swings

If you have thoughts of suicide, or trying to harm yourself or others, call your local community mental health center right away or go to the nearest emergency department.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Ways To Help Yourself

- Join a support group or talk to a counselor about your feelings.
- Try using meditation or relaxation.
- Use prayer or other types of spiritual support.
- Try to remain active and exercise when you can.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs.
- Talk with your doctor about possible treatments for depression.

For more information or to learn how to manage depression, call the Department of Social Work at 614-366-5119 to speak with a social worker.

Adapted from: [*Caring for the Patient with Cancer at Home*](#), American Cancer Society