



# Living Well

Fall 2011

## Depressive and Anxiety Disorders

Everyone occasionally has short-lived feelings of sadness; however, feeling down more so than not can be a sign of a bigger problem. Sadness lasting longer than a few days or interfering with daily activities could be depression, a serious condition that can cause many emotional and physical problems. Depression can lead to anxiety, the most common mental health issue in the United States, and vice-versa. In fact, the co-occurrence of depression and anxiety is almost 60 percent, and since many symptoms of depression and anxiety overlap, treatments for both disorders are used interchangeably.

Each year depression affects more than 17 million Americans and anxiety affects more than 40 million. Women endure depression and anxiety twice as often as men, and those living in urban areas or at lower socioeconomic levels have higher rates of depression and anxiety than those living in rural areas or at higher socioeconomic levels. Depression and anxiety can develop during childhood and remain an issue throughout one's life. When these conditions develop during adulthood, bouts usually begin in one's thirties.

The proper diagnosis and treatment of a depressive and/or anxiety disorder can help individuals feel better after a few weeks of therapy. However, many people do not realize they are suffering from one of these disorders. Being a member of an MDVIP-affiliated practice provides you with a close doctor-patient partnership that may help accurately identify and manage these conditions as depression and anxiety screening are standard in the MDVIP Wellness Program.

Signs/Symptoms of Depressive and Anxiety Disorders	Depression	Anxiety
Difficulty concentrating	X	X
Excessive worry, fear and/or dread		X
Fatigue	X	X
Feeling guilty, worthless and/or helpless	X	X*
Feeling restless, irritable, stressed and/or jumpy	X	X
Feeling sad, hopeless and/or pessimistic	X	X*
Headaches, body aches, muscle tension, teeth grinding and/or jaw clenching	X	X
Loss of interest in hobbies and/or social activities	X	X*
Obsessing over large and small concerns and/or an unrealistic view of problems		X
Overeating and/or undereating	X	X
Oversleeping and/or insomnia	X	X
Shortness of breath, surges in heart rate and/or chest pain/pressure		X
Suicidal thoughts and/or attempts	X	X*
Sweating and/or hot flashes		X
Trembling and/or twitching		X
Upset stomach, digestive problems and/or irritable bowel syndrome	X	X

*\*Depression is a symptom of anxiety; therefore, those with anxiety often have the same symptoms as those with depression.*

### Types of Depressive Disorders

The various types of depressive disorders are described below.

- Major depression is a combination of symptoms such as sadness, irritability and worthlessness that persist for at least two consecutive weeks and interfere with daily activities, responsibilities and interests. It disables individuals and often alters sleeping and eating patterns. Bouts of major depression can occur multiple times.
- Dysthymic depression is a less severe, longer-lasting version of major depression. Although it is not disruptive to one's life, it does create feelings of

unhappiness and impacts the ability to function at full capacity. It is possible for people to suffer from a double depression, which is a combination of major depression and dysthymic depression.

- Unspecified depression is similar to dysthymic depression in that it is not as severe as major depression but it often lacks a known cause. Experts speculate that unspecified depression is related to one's thought process and belief system as opposed to a specific event.
- Adjustment disorder with depression is a temporary, mild form of depression in response to a stressful event or adjustment period in one's life. Common causes include divorce, family illness or financial problems. Adjustment disorder with depression has the same symptoms as major depression, but they usually taper as the situation is resolved or becomes less stressful.
- Bipolar depression is a disorder involving drastic mood swings ranging from severe, debilitating depression with feelings of sadness, fatigue and apathy to a manic state with feelings of euphoria, high energy and keen interest. The frequency of mood swings varies. And while some individuals experience them every few months, others are affected daily. Additionally, some people experience the symptoms of depression and mania simultaneously.
- Seasonal depression is an annual major depression that occurs primarily in the fall or winter months. Experts believe that living with less sunlight during these seasons lowers *(Continued on inside page)*

# Depressive and Anxiety Disorders (cont.)

the hormone serotonin, which provides feelings of happiness, and the hormone melatonin, which helps regulate sleep. The lack of sunlight can also disrupt your biological clock affecting your sleeping patterns and leading to depression.

- Psychotic depression is a major depression accompanied by symptoms of psychosis such as delusions and hallucinations.
- Holiday depression is a culmination of stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, financial constraints, over-commercialization of the holiday season and year-end life reviews that can cause sadness, loneliness, reflection on past disappointments and anxiety about the future.

## Types of Anxiety Disorders

The various types of anxiety disorders are described below.

- Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is persistent and unrealistic worrying about minor problems, daily events or the future without a legitimate basis for concern. GAD often causes physical symptoms like high blood pressure, increased heart rate, muscle tension, sweating and shaking.
- Panic disorder is reoccurring episodes of spontaneous, intense fear that trigger a host of physical symptoms similar to a heart attack - palpitations, nausea, sweating, chest pain/pressure and dizziness.

- Agoraphobia is associated with panic disorder. It is a morbid fear of having a panic attack or panic-like symptoms in a public place. This fear commonly occurs in wide-open spaces, crowds or uncontrolled social situations. Social

witnessed or experienced a traumatic event like a natural disaster, violent crime, serious accident or military situation. Depression and substance abuse often fuel PTSD.

- Specific phobias are irrational

fears of ordinary places, situations and objects. They can interfere with activities and can be debilitating. Common phobias include closed spaces, heights and insects.

## Complications

When depression and anxiety are not treated properly, they can take a toll on one's physical and emotional health and possibly lead to the following conditions:

- anxiety can be an underlying cause.
- Social anxiety disorder is an extreme fear of scrutiny and judgment from participating in social situations that involve interactions with other people. Many individuals with this disorder avoid socializing.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is

- and anxiety are not treated properly, they can take a toll on one's physical and emotional health and possibly lead to the following conditions:
  - Heart disease
  - Stroke
  - Cancer
  - Asthma
  - Digestive ailments; including irritable bowel syndrome
  - Accidents
  - Substance abuse
  - Cirrhosis of the liver
  - Overeating
  - Excessive gambling
  - Chronic pain such as headaches, back pain, fibromyalgia
  - Adult attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
  - Suicide

Depression and anxiety are a part of life; when untreated, they can lead to a myriad of health and personal

Possible Causes of Depressive and Anxiety Disorders			
Brain Chemistry	Brain Structure	Genetics	Stressful/Traumatic Circumstances
Lower or higher than normal levels of specific brain chemicals can cause depression and/or anxiety.	Having significantly less brain chemical receptors and/or a thin right cortex can cause depression and/or anxiety.	Certain gene variations can cause depression and anxiety.	Experiencing abuse, death, divorce and/or unemployment can cause or worsen depression and/or anxiety, especially if these situations occur during childhood.

Risk Factors of Depressive and Anxiety Disorders	
<b>Gender</b>	Women are twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with depression and/or anxiety. Researchers speculate hormonal fluctuations raise the risk of depression.
<b>Family History</b>	A family history of depression, anxiety, alcoholism and/or suicide raises the risk of depression.
<b>Family Dynamics</b>	Worrying about money, health or world events during your childhood can raise your risk of developing irrational fears or phobias at some point during your life.
<b>Personality Traits</b>	Being overly dependent on others, self-critical or pessimistic raises the risk of depression; while, having difficulties relating to others or handling uncertainty raises the risk of anxiety.
<b>Medical Conditions</b>	Syndromes such as migraine, obstructive sleep apnea, mitral valve prolapse, irritable bowel, premenstrual and chronic fatigue raise the risk of panic disorders; major illnesses like cancer, Alzheimer's disease and HIV/AIDS can trigger anxiety about health and finances.
<b>Childhood Adversity</b>	Children who experience bullying or traumatic family events have a higher risk of developing depression and/or anxiety at some point during their lives.
<b>Medications</b>	Some individuals report their blood pressure medications and sleeping pills as affecting their moods, which can raise the risk of depression.
<b>Lifestyle Factors</b>	Abusing illicit drugs, prescription medications and/or alcohol, living at a low socioeconomic level and having few personal relationships raise the risk for depression.

- characterized by unwanted, unreasonable thoughts that cause anxiety and compel one to perform ritualistic behavior to feel relief.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a potentially debilitating condition that occurs among individuals who have

complications. Learning to recognize the symptoms of these conditions and promptly discussing them with your MDVIP-affiliated physician can help you receive the treatment you need to feel better and to prevent depression and anxiety from progressing.





# Therapy, Medication & Lifestyle Changes That Can Help

It is important and sometimes even lifesaving to seek medical treatment for depression and anxiety. Usually a team of professionals, led by your MDVIP-affiliated doctor or a psychiatrist, develops a treatment plan. Because of the number of side effects associated with antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications, treatment plans are modified frequently and medications are prescribed on a trial and error basis. Classes of anti-depression and anti-anxiety prescription medications are as follows:

## **Antidepressant Medications**

- SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) and its variations control brain chemistry imbalances that cause depression. Currently they are the medications of choice for depression as they have fewer side effects than other types of antidepressants.
- Tricyclic antidepressants are also used to manage one's brain chemistry; however, they are prescribed less often than SSRIs because they are not as effective and tend to have more side effects.
- MAOIs (monoamine oxidase inhibitors) are used only if the other types of antidepressants are ineffective as they are associated with serious side effects.

## **Anti-Anxiety Medications**

- SSRIs are also the most common type of anti-anxiety drugs as they manage brain chemistry imbalances.
- Sedatives are effective but prescribed on a short-term basis as over time they become less effective and cause dependencies. They are usually reserved for severe bouts of anxiety that require additional medication or while waiting for SSRIs to take effect.
- Sleeping pills are technically not anxiety medications but are included on anxiety medication lists because they can help control insomnia, which can lead to or exacerbate anxiety.

And while lifestyle behaviors are not considered a form of treatment for depression or anxiety, some experts believe that nutrition, sleep and exercise have a role in managing these conditions.

## **The Role of Lifestyle in Managing Depression and Anxiety**

### **Nutrition**

Some researchers have found that nutrition can affect depression and anxiety. If you experience bouts of either condition, consider the following suggestions.

- Eat foods high in omega-3 fatty acids such as walnuts, salmon and mackerel as these fats increase the amount of and sensitivity to brain chemicals that seem to elevate mood and alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Eat foods high in magnesium such as halibut, almonds and spinach to prevent a deficiency that can damage nerves and cause depression.
- Eat foods high in B12 and folate like salmon, trout and fortified whole-grain cereals for depression, and spinach, citrus fruits and fortified whole-grain cereals for anxiety. These vitamins break down homocysteine, a protein building block that might cause depression when its levels become too high.
- Eat foods high in protein such as nuts, beans, lean meats, poultry and eggs as it will increase your intake of tryptophan, a protein building block that helps prevent depression.

- Eat dark chocolate with at least 70 percent cacao as it releases endorphins, which are "feel-good" hormones.
- Eat low-glycemic foods such as certain fruits (berries, cherries and plums), whole-grain breads and cereals, dairy products, vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower and sweet potatoes) and desserts (pound cake, baked apples and dark chocolate) as these foods may help control mood swings and depression.
- Eat foods with calcium such as dairy products and green leafy vegetables as a calcium deficiency can cause agitation, depression, insomnia and irritability.
- Eat foods with potassium such as lima beans, potatoes and bananas as it helps the nervous system function properly, helping to control depression.

### **Sleep**

As mentioned, depression and anxiety can cause sleep problems; and in turn, sleep issues can exacerbate depression and anxiety. Discuss your concerns with your MDVIP-affiliated physician and consider trying the following:

- Exercise on a regular basis and avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol, especially after dinner.
- Take a hot bath or shower, read a book or listen to relaxing music before going to bed.
- Choose a comfortable and supportive mattress and pillow, darken the room, adjust the temperature to your liking and wear loose-fitting clothing.
- Add white noise to your bedroom by investing in a white noise machine or simply running a fan or air conditioning unit.

### **Exercise**

As we exercise, our brains release endorphins that function as natural antidepressants that can elevate moods and keep them elevated for hours after a workout. Exercise also raises body temperature which seems to have a calming effect. Some researchers believe that exercise may even be as effective as a second medication for depression and all you need is 10 to 15 minutes each day to receive mood-elevating benefits. Once cleared by your MDVIP-affiliated doctor to exercise, consider the following tips:

- Find an activity that you enjoy; combine physical and social activity by inviting a friend.
- Many experts suggest walking as this activity tends to have a calming effect. If you are new to exercise, begin by walking around your block, eventually working your way up to longer, more frequent workouts.
- Initially, anxiety sufferers might want to try keeping their physical activities at a slower pace as intense workouts can elevate heart and breathing rates which can cause panic attacks.
- Studies also support using yoga to control depression and anxiety as it appears to modulate the stress response systems.

### **Self-Help**

Some additional options are available that can be used in conjunction with medical treatment to help you recover or manage depression and anxiety. Many individuals find a support group is effective for introducing new coping skills and relaxation techniques. There are also many helpful CDs and books written by experts on depression and anxiety.



# Test Your Knowledge

Depression and anxiety disorders are medical illnesses that involve the mind and body. They affect how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems. Take the following quiz to learn more.

- 1. What are some possible reasons individuals with asthma are twice as likely to develop depression?**
  - A. Poorly managed asthma can be stressful, causing inactivity and social isolation.
  - B. Asthma medications can cause depression.
  - C. The chronic inflammation involved with asthma can cause neural changes affecting behavior, such as loss of appetite and interest in social activities, depressed mood and lethargy.
  - D. All of the above
- 2. Many times those suffering with thyroid disease are misdiagnosed with depression and/or anxiety. Why is this?**
  - A. An overactive thyroid produces too many hormones, which can cause nervousness and irritability.
  - B. An underactive thyroid produces too little hormones, causing fatigue, mood swings and irritability.
  - C. The hormonal receptors of those with thyroid conditions often do not receive the appropriate amount of hormones from the blood, which can cause emotional and behavioral symptoms, even if the individual is taking thyroid medications.
  - D. All of the above
- 3. What fraction of people suffering from depression is not treated?**
  - A. One-fourth
  - B. One-third
  - C. One-half
  - D. Two-thirds
- 4. In a given year, what percentage of the U.S. population suffers from at least one phobia?**
  - A. 8 percent
  - B. 28 percent
  - C. 48 percent
  - D. 68 percent

ANSWERS  
1. D | 2. D | 3. D | 4. A



## Baked apples with cherries and almonds

[ Serves 6 ]

This recipe is suggested by experts for those experiencing depression or anxiety because cherries are low in sugar, almonds are a good source of protein and magnesium, and desserts in general can be comforting.

- 1/3 cup dried cherries, coarsely chopped
- 3 tablespoons chopped almonds
- 1 tablespoon wheat germ
- 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 6 small Golden Delicious apples, about 1 3/4 pounds total weight
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tablespoons dark honey
- 2 teaspoons walnut oil or canola oil

### Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350° F.

In a small bowl, toss together the cherries, almonds, wheat germ, brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg until all the ingredients are evenly distributed. Set aside.

The apples can be left unpeeled, if you like. To peel the apples in a decorative fashion, with a vegetable peeler or a sharp knife, remove the peel from each apple in a circular motion, skipping every other row so that rows of peel alternate with rows of apple flesh. Working from the stem end, core each apple, stopping 3/4 inch from the bottom.

Divide the cherry mixture evenly among the apples, pressing the mixture gently into each cavity. Arrange the apples upright in a heavy ovenproof frying pan or small baking dish just large enough to hold them. Pour the apple juice and water into the pan. Drizzle the honey and oil evenly over the apples, and cover the pan snugly with aluminum foil. Bake until the apples are tender when pierced with a knife, 50 to 60 minutes.

Transfer the apples to individual plates and drizzle with the pan juices. Serve warm or at room temperature.

### Nutritional Analysis (1 apple):

Calories 179, Cholesterol 0 mg, Protein 2 g, Sodium 5 mg, Carbohydrates 37 g, Fiber 5 g, Total fat 4 g, Saturated fat 0 g, Calcium 0 mg, Monounsaturated fat 2 g

Source: This recipe is one of 150 recipes collected in *The New Mayo Clinic Cookbook*, published by Mayo Clinic Health Information and Oxmoor House, and winner of the 2005 James Beard Award. To order the cookbook, visit Mayo Clinic's website at [www.bookstore.mayooclinic.com](http://www.bookstore.mayooclinic.com).

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