

Depression: Using a Symptom Diary



If you are getting treatment for depression, you will need to tell your doctor whether your treatment is working. You may begin to feel better within 1 to 3 weeks of starting antidepressant medicine. It can take as many as 6 to 8 weeks to see more improvement. If you have problems or concerns about your medicines, or you do not notice any improvement within 3 weeks, talk to your doctor.

Antidepressant medicines have side effects that you should keep track of. Many of these side effects go away after you take the medicine for a few weeks.

You can use a symptom diary to keep track of how you are responding to your treatment. This will help your doctor decide whether to change your treatment.

Symptom diary

Writing down how you feel each day is a good way to keep track of your treatment. A symptom diary can be as simple as a spiral notebook or a journal you keep on your computer.

Keep track of how you feel mentally and physically. Write down any side effects you have from your medicine. Take your diary with you when you visit your doctor.

This is a sample of the questions you might answer every day in your diary:

- Did you feel sad or have "the blues" today? How long did it last?
- Did something trigger that feeling?
- Were you able to help yourself feel better? If so, what did you do?
- How did you sleep last night? Did you feel restless or wake up a lot? Or did you have trouble falling asleep?
- Were you able to carry out your normal activities today? Or did you not feel like doing anything?
- Were you confused or nervous today? What made you feel that way?
- Did you feel dizzy or lightheaded today? Did you have any drowsiness?
- Did you have any stomach upset? Diarrhea?
- Did you have back pain, chest pain, aches and pains, or other physical problems?

- Did you have any of these side effects: dry mouth, blurred vision, change in appetite, fast heart rate, loss of sexual desire or ability?
- Did you have any thoughts about wishing you were dead? Did you have any thoughts about killing yourself?