



University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center

INSTRUCTION SHEET: DEPRESSION

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed depression. Your symptoms appear to be caused or increased by depression.

Everyone feels sad or “down” from time to time. We all have good days and bad days. All of us feel sad following the loss of a loved one or after breaking up with a special friend. However, if sadness persists for too long or disrupts a person's ability to function, it can be a serious problem that requires treatment.

Depression can cause *real* physical symptoms. There is no true separation of mind and body: When the mind is stressed, physical symptoms can result.

Depression is not permanent, and it is treatable. *Early* treatment helps keep depression from getting worse or lasting a long time. Treatment can help a person return to his/her “normal” self, ready to enjoy life again. Treatment can help prevent depression from coming back, as well,

Depression is most often treated with counseling sessions (psychotherapy), antidepressant medication, or a combination of both. Left untreated, depression can last for weeks, months or even years. Treatment can help depression lift in 8 to 12 weeks or less. The main risk in not getting treatment is suicide.

People with depression sometimes think about suicide. The actual risk of suicide is higher if the depression is not treated. When depression is successfully treated, thoughts of suicide will go away.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR DEPRESSION:

1. Get help! Professional counseling is helpful in identifying causes of depression and in helping you overcome depression. The UNCW Counseling Center provides *confidential* counseling for students. Proceed to the UNCW Counseling Center *as soon as possible*. The counselors there will provide evaluation and insight, and determine with you what the best treatment is for you.
2. Do your best to go to the Counseling Center prepared to deal with your depression in a constructive manner. Talk about your problems and feelings rather than keeping them inside.
3. Private psychologists, psychiatrists, or counselors can also provide guidance — the Counseling Center can assist you in making appointments with community providers if needed.
4. Counseling Center or community providers may also prescribe medication to help control the symptoms of depression. Medication can be of significant help, but realize that the medication takes time to work. Antidepressant medications may cause improvement as soon as 1 week after starting the medicine, but full effects may take 8 to 12 weeks.
5. Seek avenues of self-help. Self-help books can also help you regain control of your life.
6. Regular, dynamic (moving) exercise has been shown to help relieve depression. Running, jogging, bicycling, swimming, playing tennis, or just walking outdoors are beneficial. Improvement in physical health is an added benefit.
7. Avoid alcohol and other drug use. Alcohol or drugs may make a person feel good short-term, but in the long run they make depression worse and cause additional problems.
8. Most importantly, if you have thoughts about hurting yourself, get help *immediately*. Tell your counselor, provider, family, or friends, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.