

# Family Medicine Clerkship

## Plain Language Summary

**Title:** Depression in Chronic Illness

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**Plain Language Summary:**



### **What is Depression?**

It is normal to feel down. But when you start to feel down day after day for a few weeks at a time, you might have depression. Major depression is an episode of sadness or not caring that lasts a few weeks and is accompanied with other symptoms. Depression does not mean it's your fault or that you have a bad personality. It affects many people and can be treated medically.

### **How do I know if I am depressed?**

Depression symptoms can be emotional and/or physical. Emotionally, you might experience sadness, loss of interest in life and activities you used to enjoy. You might also feel a sense of guilt, worthlessness, lack of hope, as well as thoughts of death and ending your own life. Physically, you might feel tired, unable to sleep or sleep too much. Depression can also worsen other illnesses you have, especially chronic illnesses.

### **How does depression affect my chronic illness?**

Depression can be caused by the illness itself and can also make your chronic condition worse. Symptoms such as pain, fatigue, isolation that are already present may be worsened because of depression.

### **What chronic illnesses are related to depression?**

Depression rates are high in people who are affected by these diseases

- Heart attack
- Coronary Artery Disease w/out heart attack
- Parkinson's disease
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Chronic pain syndrome

### **When should I ask for help?**

As soon as you start noticing that the depressive symptoms are worsening and are staying longer than usual, you should seek professional help by going to your doctor. Individuals with chronic health conditions who experience depression are less likely to seek help because the patients and their families overlook the depressive symptoms thinking that it is because of their chronic condition. So, it is important to pay attention to the symptoms of depression and seek help.

### **Where can I find more information?**

Coping with Chronic Illnesses and Depression: Webmd

<http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/chronic-illnesses-depression>

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