



## Surviving the Teens® Tips for Coping with Depression

### **Stay Connected with Your Family and Friends**

Spend more time with your family and friends. Have fun together. For instance, eat meals with your family and share highs and lows of your day. Depression can make you feel all alone and unloved. It can make you think your family is against you. Challenge these negative thoughts and let your family know how you are feeling. Your family does care about you and wants to help. Letting them know is the first step of *Steps to LAST™*. You can learn about *Steps to LAST™* and positive ways to deal with family conflicts by visiting [www.cincinnatichildrens.org/surviving-teens](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/surviving-teens).

### **Stick with Psychotherapy**

- Give it a chance to work; it is one of the best ways to relieve symptoms of depression. For instance, it can help you:
  - Learn how to control your thoughts, feelings, and actions
  - Communicate better with others and problem-solve
- Let your therapist know when therapy does not seem to help. The therapist needs your feedback to improve your therapy sessions.

### **Take Prescribed Medications as Directed**

- Taking your antidepressant medication is the best way to relieve severe symptoms of depression. Do not stop taking it without your doctor's approval. If you do, it can cause your symptoms of depression to return. It can also lead to thoughts of suicide.
- Talk to your doctor before taking over-the-counter medications or herbal products. Avoid energy drinks and alcohol. These can interfere with how your medication works. Tell your doctor if:
  - Your depression gets worse
  - You have unpleasant side effects or feel anxious or hyper
  - You have thoughts of harming yourself or wanting to die

### **Get Enough Sleep**

You need between 9 and 10 hours of sleep each night. Depression can affect how much you sleep. If you have trouble sleeping at night, try:

- Drinking a glass of milk or eating a protein snack before bedtime
- Relaxation exercises, such as deep-breathing
- Avoiding foods or drinks with caffeine after 2 PM
- Talking to your doctor about other ways to help you sleep

### **Get Enough Exercise**

You should get at least 30 - 60 minutes of exercise each day. You may have less energy with depression and will have to work up to this amount. Exercise can increase your self-esteem and decrease anxiety, tension, and depression. Try these ideas:

- Ride your bike, use roller blades, or take brisk walks
- Jump rope, do jumping jacks, dance, or use an exercise video
- Play a Wii game or your favorite sport

### **Eat Healthy Foods**

Your eating habits may change with depression. You need a balanced diet for your brain and body. Eat three meals a day and do not skip breakfast. Instead of candy, eat fresh fruits and vegetables or yogurt for snacks. Learn more about healthy eating at <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/index.html>.