



MENDING HEARTS FOR A HAPPIER, HEALTHIER YOU!

*A guide to help with depression
after heart disease.*



DOING WHAT'S BEST.



IS IT NORMAL TO FEEL DEPRESSED AFTER A HEART PROCEDURE OR HEART ATTACK?

About one in five people suffer from major depression after a heart attack, bypass surgery, or angioplasty. Some degree of depression occurs in up to a third of all heart patients. Women generally experience more depressive symptoms than men after a heart attack or bypass surgery. People with additional illnesses such as diabetes, kidney, or liver disease who survive a heart attack are more likely to experience depression.

Depression arises for various reasons. In some people, depression and heart disease may reflect a genetic vulnerability that can trigger both conditions. Depression that first appears after a heart procedure may represent fear of dying or grief over loss of health. Fear and grief don't necessarily respond to the same treatment strategies, so figuring out the cause of the problem may help in finding the right therapy.

UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

It's almost impossible not to be scared, irritable or upset. You may have "the blues." You may feel down in the dumps and think you're hopelessly damaged or crippled. You may even have thoughts like, "What's the use?" or "Life is over." These thoughts are normal, and time will cure most of your unpleasant feelings.

But some symptoms, such as serious depression or suicidal thoughts, should be taken seriously. Don't pretend nothing is wrong. If you're constantly irritable, depressed or drinking heavily, tell your doctor.

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

Your moods will vary widely from day to day, and your thoughts will reflect your moods. In fact, it usually takes two to six months before emotions associated with heart procedures to fade away. Because this is a trying time, you and your family and friends need understanding and compassion. Be patient with yourself and your loved ones.



DEPRESSION CAN BE TREATED

The first step in treating depression is to seek medical help. Your doctor can evaluate the effect of your medications. A mental health professional can assess the severity of your symptoms and the role of family history or other factors.



RECOGNIZING DEPRESSION

Depression is defined as having persistent feelings of sadness that prevent a person from enjoying formerly satisfying activities.

Symptoms can include:

- Despair, hopelessness, irritability or anxiety
- Guilt, feeling worthless
- Low energy
- Diminished interest in activities
- Difficulty with decision-making, poor concentration
- Frequent crying
- Inability to sleep or excessive sleep
- Eating too much or poor appetite
- Physical complaints that are unresponsive to treatment
- Suicidal thoughts

IS IT NORMAL TO BE SCARED?

If you're like most people, you've probably had thoughts like: "Am I going to die? Am I living on borrowed time?" But your worries will go away as time passes.

Physical symptoms may cause fear, too. For instance, before you probably never gave small, fleeting pains a second thought. Now the tiniest twinge in your chest may worry you. That's normal. The passing of time will ease these fears as well.

Anger is another common emotion. You've probably thought, "Why did this have to happen to me? And why did it have to happen now?"

Your feelings are normal. Be patient, and give yourself a chance to recover. These intense emotions will recede over time.



OTHER COMMON EMOTIONS

You may be concerned that you won't be the same person you were before. Perhaps you think others will think you're weak or incomplete. You may be afraid you won't be able to work as hard or be a helpful spouse or parent. You may even think that now it's too late to do all the things you've dreamed of doing. To some extent, everyone in your situation feels this way. But try not to expect the worst.

Bitterness or resentment is common after being diagnosed with any type of heart disease. You may lose your patience; your friends and family may irritate you. But before you snap at them, remember that it's normal to have feelings of resentment. Your misfortune isn't their fault. Being angry is one stage in your recovery, so accept it. Don't take it out on your loved ones.



COPING WITH YOUR FEELINGS

After your heart procedure, you'll probably feel a wide range of emotions. Fear and anger are two of the most common.



FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Heart procedures or heart disease likely had a big emotional impact on your family members and friends too. They were probably very scared when you were in the hospital. Now they may feel resentful, this is normal. They're really not blaming you, even though it may seem like it sometimes.

It's also common for family or friends to feel guilty. They may feel they're responsible for doing something that led to your situation. Teenage children, in particular, may feel this way. Talk to them about their feelings. Reassure them that even though it happened suddenly, the conditions that caused your situation took years to develop.

If friends or family members have fear or resentments, it's better to bring those feelings out into the open. Don't let bad feelings smolder, they are destructive.

RESOURCE NUMBERS:

For 24-hour assistance, please call:

Suicide Hotline (800) 273-TALK

McLaren Bay Region Emergency (989) 894-3111

McLaren Bay Region Behavioral Health (989) 894-3911

Area Community Mental Health Agencies

AuSable Valley CMH (800) 442-7315

Bay Arenac Behavioral Health (989) 895-2300
(800) 327-4693

Huron Behavioral Health (800) 356-5568

Northern Lakes CMH (231) 922-4802

Saginaw County (800) 233-0022

Tuscola Behavioral Health (800) 462-6814



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