



Your days ahead
can be brighter
with a little help



BeWell

 **Sanitas**
Medical Center

Coping with **Depression**



Taking care of yourself involves more than just the physical. Good health means being strong inside and out, from head to toe, physically, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually. It defines what makes up your whole self. Just as physical fitness helps bodies stay strong, mental fitness helps achieve and sustain a state of good mental health.

Nurturing mental health can also help combat or prevent mental health problems that are sometimes associated with a chronic physical illness. In some cases, it can prevent the onset or relapse of a physical or mental illness. Managing stress well, for instance, can have a positive impact on heart disease.

At Sanitas, we help our patients by providing complete health care. Our BeWell program helps you understand how positive mental health impacts your life, environment, the people in it—and how to effectively cope with unpleasant situations and enjoy life once again. Let us help you BeWell.



Life has many **Ups and downs**



However, when you feel like the downs just won't go away, it's time to consider a helping hand. Have you recently struggled with?


- Feeling down, sad, or "empty"
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Restlessness, irritability
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities you normally love, including sex
- Decreased energy, fatigue, feeling "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Problems getting to sleep, waking up in the middle of the night with trouble getting back to bed, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Unexplained low appetite and weight loss or unexplained overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or feeling like you'd be better off dead
- Physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders and pain for which no other cause has been found
- Feeling nervous, restless or tense
- Sense of impending danger, panic or doom
- Increased heart rate or palpitations
- Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation)
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Gastrointestinal (GI) problems
- Having difficulty controlling worry
- Avoiding things that trigger anxiety

You're not alone

You or someone you know may have been struggling with depression, anxiety or both. Thankfully, you're not alone. Seven percent (7%) of the American population struggles with at least five (5) of these symptoms at the same time. People between the ages of 19 and 29 have the highest rate of these types of symptoms. This condition is professionally called depression.

Anxiety disorders, feelings of worry and anxiousness that are very difficult to control, are also very common in the United States with twenty-eight percent (28%) of the population diagnosed yearly. More so, anxiety and depressive disorders frequently occur at the same time and managing them becomes even more difficult. What do you do next? As you read this booklet, you will learn about depression and anxiety and how to manage these conditions.

Types of Depression



There are different kinds of depression and they are all similar because they share the same type of symptoms but impact you in different ways.

What we just described is called **major depressive disorder** which is the most common form of depression which comes in episodes and lasts at least two weeks. Once you've had one episode, without help, it is likely to come back. These episodes may happen out of the blue or as a result of something that happens in your life such as a death, breakup, or medical illness. These symptoms cause distress and make it difficult to live your life. These episodes can be so severe that people struggling with these symptoms may even think about ending their lives.

Persistent depressive disorder is similar to major depressive disorder but it has fewer symptoms for at least 2 years. It can disguise itself as constant irritability and stress. While this is less severe than a major depressive disorder episode, it can still interfere in your life in a significant way and impact your relationships with family and friends.



Postpartum depression occurs following the birth of a child to approximately 10 to 15 percent of women. Symptoms usually begin within the first 4 weeks after birth. These symptoms make it difficult for mothers to care for their babies and cause difficulty in relationships. Without treatment this kind of depression can develop into a major depressive episode.

Seasonal affective disorder is a form of depression that has a pattern with the seasons. During the autumn and winter months depression symptoms increase to clinical (severe enough to cause distress) levels and usually decrease when spring and summer arrive. Where you live and how much sunlight you get in the winter and autumn months impacts this condition. People further from the equator and that see less sunlight are usually more affected by this condition.

Bipolar disorder is another type of condition where you may feel depressed just like in an episode of major depressive disorder, however, your mood can swing gradually or suddenly and you can experience what is called a manic or hypomanic episode. A manic episode (or a less severe hypomanic episode) is a period of excessive irritability, racing thoughts, goal directed behavior, poor judgement, impulsiveness, increased energy, decreased need for sleep, exaggerated sense of self-importance, increase talkativeness, increased sexual desire, and inappropriate social behavior. Manic or hypomanic episodes usually last at least a week. These mood swings can be destructive and need the help of a specialist to help bring the moods into balance.

Depression can take a toll



Depression is a serious condition that if left untreated can take a toll on you and your family. Untreated depression can lead to:

- ✓ Excess weight gain or obesity, which can lead to heart disease and diabetes
- ✓ Pain or physical illness
- ✓ Alcohol or drug abuse and dependence
- ✓ Anxiety, panic disorder or social phobia
- ✓ Family conflicts, relationship difficulties, and work or school problems
- ✓ Social isolation
- ✓ Suicidal feelings, suicide attempts or suicide
- ✓ Self-mutilation, such as cutting
- ✓ Premature death from medical conditions from lack of self-care



People from all walks of life
struggle with these conditions—
but there is help!

At Sanitas, we pride ourselves on providing care for you as a whole—and that includes supporting you with strategies to help get your life back on track.



Anxiety

Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. The first day of school, going to a job interview, or giving a speech may cause most people to feel fearful and nervous. Anxiety helps us get out of harm's way and prepare for important events.

When anxiety is persistent, excessive, uncontrollable, overwhelming, disabling, and it interferes with your daily routine, you may have an anxiety disorder.

What are the 6 types of anxiety disorders?

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder:** People with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) struggle with excessive anxiety or worry, most days for at least 6 months, about a number of things such as personal health, work, social interactions, and everyday routine life circumstances. The fear and anxiety can cause significant problems in areas of their life, such as social interactions, school, and work.
- **Panic Disorder** People with panic disorder have repetitive unexpected panic attacks. Panic attacks are sudden periods of intense fear that come on quickly and reach their peak within minutes. This fear can come with physical symptoms such as sweating, increased heart rate, trembling, and problems with vision or hearing. Attacks can occur unexpectedly or can be brought on by a trigger, such as a feared object or situation. People with panic disorder often worry about when the next attack will happen and actively try to prevent future attacks by avoiding places, situations, or behaviors.



- **Phobia-related disorders:** A phobia is an intense fear to specific objects or situations. Although it can be realistic to be anxious in some circumstances, the fear people with phobias feel is out of proportion to the actual danger caused by the situation or object. You may have an irrational or excessive worry about encountering the feared object or situation and take active steps to avoid the feared object or situation.
- **Social anxiety disorder:** People with social anxiety disorder have a general intense fear of, or anxiety toward, social or performance situations. They worry that actions or behaviors associated with their anxiety will be negatively evaluated by others, leading them to feel embarrassed. This worry often causes people with social anxiety to avoid social situations.
- **Agoraphobia:** People with agoraphobia have an intense fear of two or more of the following situations: using public transportation, being in open spaces, being in enclosed spaces, standing in line or being in a crowd or being outside of the home alone. People with agoraphobia often avoid these situations, in part, because they think being able to leave might be difficult or impossible in the event, they have panic-like reactions or other embarrassing symptoms.
- **Separation anxiety disorder:** Separation anxiety is often thought of as something that only children deal with; however, adults can also be diagnosed with separation anxiety disorder. People who have separation anxiety disorder have fears about being parted from people to whom they are attached.



Can anxiety kill you?

Even though panic attacks can feel like a heart attack or other serious condition, it will not cause you to die. However, panic attacks are serious and need to be treated. If you find yourself experiencing any of these symptoms on a regular basis, it's essential that you contact your care team for further help.

In some cases, anxiety signs and symptoms are the first indicators of a medical illness. If your primary care provider suspects your anxiety may have a medical cause, he or she may order tests to look for signs of a problem.



How to tell if you may be struggling with depression or anxiety

Health professionals use a tool called the patient health questionnaire (also known as the PHQ-9 for its nine questions) to measure symptoms most often associated with depression and generalized anxiety disorder questionnaire (GAD-7 for its seven questions). The PHQ-9 and GAD-7 are professionally trusted tools that can tell health care professionals if someone needs extra support to help cope with their symptoms and track progress of treatment. The PHQ-9 and GAD-7 can be completed on your own and asks if you've felt symptoms not at all, several days, more than half the days, or nearly every day. Lastly, the PHQ-9 asks you how difficult these symptoms have made your life. While the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 are very helpful it is always best to leave the reading of results to your healthcare worker as symptoms that look like depression can be related to other conditions and situations.

How to get help



There are many different treatment options for getting help. The most popular include talk therapy (in groups or individually) and medications.

Talk therapy, also called psychotherapy, focuses on learning skills and taking specific steps to learn to cope with all the struggles caused by these symptoms. This can occur in groups or individually and many different types of talk therapy exist all with their strengths and weaknesses. Talk therapy is performed by qualified professionals with advanced education trained to identify and treat a large variety of mental health issues with just their words. Some of the most effective talk therapy styles for coping with depressive symptoms are cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), behavioral activation treatment for depression (BATD), and interpersonal therapy (IPT).

Here at Sanitas we provide individual interventions based on proven techniques that teach you how to live a healthy lifestyle so you can start feeling better faster.

Medications can also be used to help improve symptoms when talk therapy just isn't enough. Most evidence shows that the greatest improvements in symptoms happen when both medication and talk therapy are used together. Often primary care doctors can provide medication treatment for most cases of depression and anxiety and can help monitor responses. Some people only need to take medications for a while and some may need to take medications for a long time depending on severity and the doctor's recommendations. There are a lot of types of medications, so it sometimes takes a couple attempts to make sure the medications chosen are the right ones for the job. Psychiatrists, who are specialized doctors that have focused on learning psychology, can often help when there is a mental health issue along with medical complications.

Here at Sanitas, our doctors consult with psychiatrists to make sure the right individualized treatment strategy is used. Talk to your doctor to discuss the pros and cons of each medication to see if this treatment is right for you.

ALERT

Most importantly, whatever treatment you choose it is very important to stick to it. Stopping treatments once they have started can lead to a rebound effect that can leave you feeling worse off than when you started. Let us know what we can do to help you keep up your treatments until you're feeling better.

Things you can do to help you **feel better right now!**



There are a few things you can start doing that can help you feel better right away.

Try **relaxation techniques** such as meditation, mindful breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation. There are also many free smartphone apps that can help you with meditation that guide you through breathing and positive messages that can help you change your outlook. Below are a couple exercises you can start right away.

Mindful breathing

- Sit, stand, or lay somewhere you can be alone.
- Place your hand on your belly and try to feel your stomach expand when you breathe in and contract when you breathe out.
- With your other hand, slowly count to 5 with your fingers while you breathe in.
- When you get to 5, exhale for 5 more seconds keeping count on your fingers.
- Try to even out your breaths so that you're breathing in for 5 seconds and out for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 3-5 times as needed.
- Stop if you feel dizzy or lightheaded.

The more you practice, the easier it gets.
You may be able to extend your breathing time.
Keep trying—and just breathe.





Progressive muscle relaxation

- Sit or lay with legs and arms uncrossed where you can be undisturbed for about 5-10 minutes.
- Starting from the top of your head, tense your face by grimacing, clenching your teeth, and holding your eyes shut as tightly as possible for 7 seconds.
- Then, release the tension and give yourself a moment to relax and breathe. If the tension is not gone, repeat as necessary until relaxed.

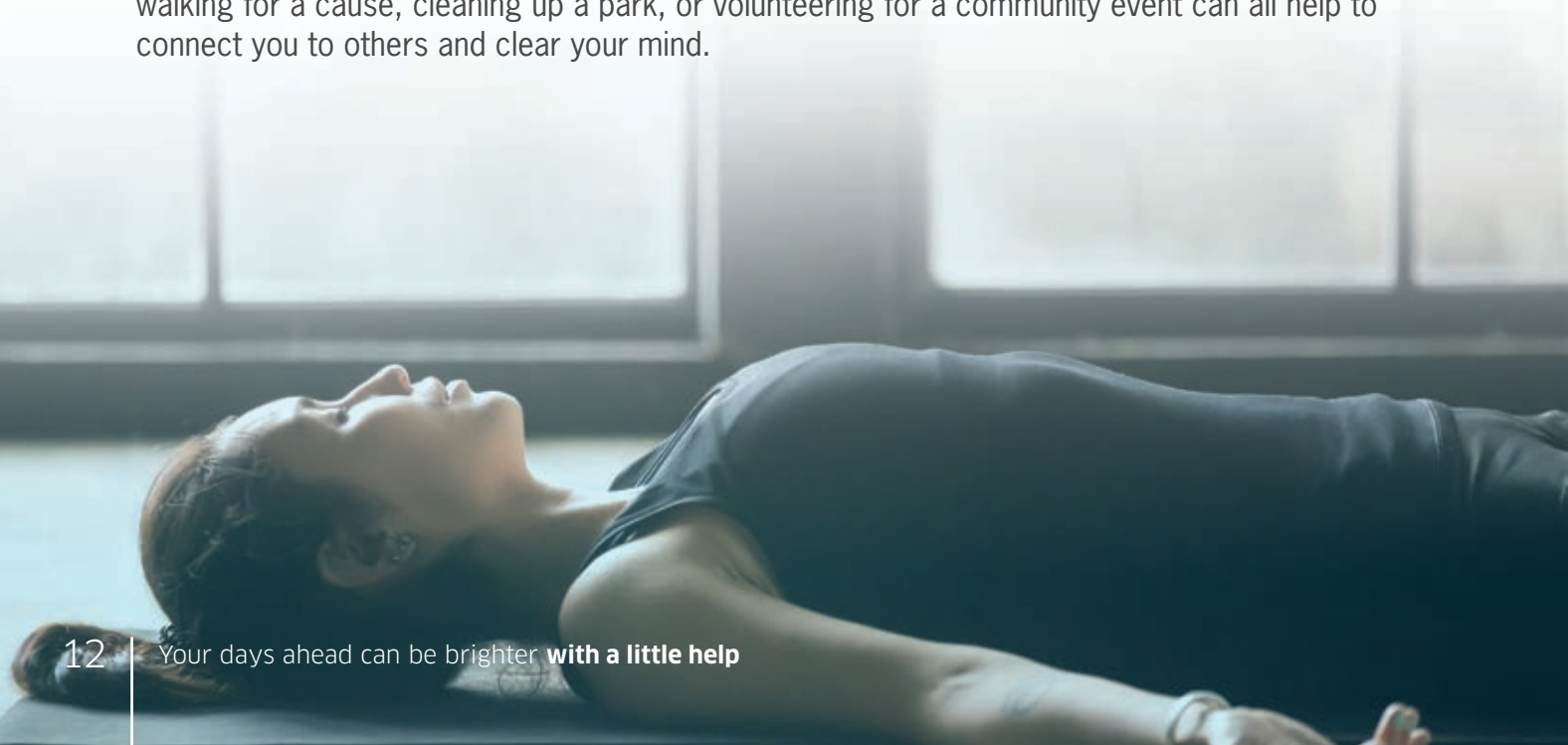
Next, move on to your neck and shoulders.

- Tense your neck and shoulders for 7 seconds by bringing your shoulders up to your neck.
- Relax, and breathe.
- Continue to tense and relax the muscles of your body, going down your chest, abdomen, arms, hands (by making a fist), lower back and buttocks, thighs, calves, and feet.

If you have pain in any part of your body, skip it so that you don't hurt yourself. The more you practice this technique, the better you'll get and the faster you can feel relaxed.

Regular **physical exercise** can be very helpful in reducing symptoms of depression. Walking, swimming, or working out at the gym has been proven to lessen both severity and length of symptoms.

Reconnecting with your meaning or spirituality can also help alleviate symptoms by focusing your thinking on things outside of yourself. Going to a spiritual service, helping at a food bank, walking for a cause, cleaning up a park, or volunteering for a community event can all help to connect you to others and clear your mind.





Count your blessings! Evidence has shown that being able to practice simple **gratitude** by making a list of anything you may be grateful for can help refocus the mind on positive thoughts even if just for a little while. Even just remembering you are alive, and breathing can help pull you out of negative thinking loops.

Here at Sanitas we provide evidence-based workshops where you can learn practical skills that will help you to take care of your body and mind.

Suicide prevention

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States of America and nearly 800,000 people die by suicide every year worldwide. Suicide impacts all cultures, ages, races, faiths, and economic status. Struggling with a depressive or anxiety disorder can make suicide more likely. Yet, suicidal thoughts and actions are preventable and treatable when caught early. Therefore, it is important to know the warning signs of suicide.

Warning Signs:

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- Talking about feeling trapped or being in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless
- Giving away personal possessions
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings



Seek help as soon as possible if you or a loved one is showing

warning signs of suicide.

- In an emergency, call 911.
- Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to talk to a skilled, trained counselor at a crisis center in your area at any time (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline).
- Call your campus suicide or crisis hotline.
- Call your doctor or mental health care provider.
- Get immediate help or ask a friend or family member to help you.
- Make sure you are not left alone.
- If someone else is in crisis, make sure they are not left alone.

Where to go:

Psychiatric hospital walk-in clinic; hospital emergency room;
urgent care center or clinic



Talking to family and friends

Family and friends can be a great support while dealing with behavioral health symptoms. However, it can be difficult to discuss your feelings with loved ones who may not understand the condition and may react with anger, fear, and denial. Here are some tips on how to talk to your family and ways they can be helpful.

Pick key people to tell first. Close friends or family which you trust would benefit from knowing you are struggling with depression. This could even be one or two people. Let them know about your symptoms, treatments, and what to do if you are feeling bad. This is very important in case of thoughts about suicide arise. Helping them have access to educational materials and having them accompany you to the doctor could be good strategies to keep them involved. Other helpful support close family and friends can provide is encouragement for sticking with treatment, identifying warning signs of a worsening condition, being willing to listen, giving positive reinforcement, offering assistance, helping create a low-stress environment, locating helpful organizations, encouraging participation in spiritual practice (if this is relevant), and making plans together.

Tell people that “need to know” such as an employer, other health professionals, and professors. Depression and some anxiety disorders are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act which means that if you need extra help keeping your job or getting through school while struggling with symptoms, schools and employers are required to make reasonable accommodations to help you during treatment. You don’t need to go into any details about your condition or treatment but just letting them know you are in treatment and are working on your condition is enough. Remember, your privacy is important and not everyone needs to know every detail of your symptoms.

Sanitas can help you

Sometimes, struggling with these feelings may be scary, embarrassing, and you may feel alone. It can feel overwhelming and it can feel like there is no hope to feel better.

There is hope, there is healing, there can be joy again.

We are here at Sanitas are dedicated to your wellbeing and we want to help connect you to programs, services, and experts that can help you reach your goals and empower you to take back your life!

