

The Goal of Treatment for Depression

The reason for treating depression symptoms is more than just to help you feel better. The goal of treatment is to eliminate the depression and anxiety symptoms you have been experiencing and keep them from coming back.



No two people have the same symptoms. Overcoming depression can mean you have normal days. . . days when you have energy again for your favorite activities. . . and interest in the things you used to enjoy doing, like spending time with family and friends.

It is important to know and be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of depression should it re-occur. It's also important to talk to your doctor as soon as you notice any signs or symptoms returning.



Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center



Bridging the Gap

...BETWEEN VA RESEARCH AND VA CLINICAL CARE

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Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System
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North Little Rock, Arkansas 72114
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Discontinuing your medication for depression:



Safely monitoring signs and symptoms, now that you are better and have been stable for some time

An important message from:



Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center

Enjoying Life Again ...after Medication

You and your doctor may decide to work together to discontinue your medication for depression if:

- You have been stable for some time
- Your symptoms have disappeared or improved to the point where they no longer interfere with activities of daily living

Your doctor will work with you to safely taper off your medication.



Symptoms of Medication Withdrawal

Discontinuing depression medications may occasionally result in withdrawal symptoms unrelated to depression itself:

- Stomach upset, vomiting, diarrhea
- Sleep disturbances
- Movement disorders
- Increase or decrease in energy level
- Irregular heart beat
- Disequilibrium (dizziness and lightheadedness)
- Headaches, irritability
- Slowed thinking
- Mild depression

Symptoms usually occur within 24 to 72 hours after discontinuing the drug. They are more likely to occur if the medication is abruptly stopped. They usually go away quickly once the medication is started again.

Signs and Symptoms of Depression

Tapering off medications over the course of several weeks can minimize the risk of withdrawal. Watch for the following signs and symptoms and report them immediately to your doctor:

- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Irritable or depressed mood
- Change in appetite or weight
- Too much or too little sleep
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate
- Re-occurring thoughts of death

Look for these early signs of major depressive disorder and work with your doctor to have a plan. . . a plan to help you seek treatment if the symptoms return once you discontinue medication.

When you discontinue your medication for depression, be aware of the signs and symptoms of the illness, and have a plan to get treatment if you notice the symptoms returning.