

Quality Standards

PATIENT REFERENCE GUIDE

Major Depression

Care for Adults and Adolescents

Let's make our health system healthier



If you or your loved one is a teenager or adult living with major depression...

Patients, families, and health care professionals partnered together on this guide to define what the best care should look like for people living with major depression. The information in this guide has been created to help patients, families, and caregivers know what to ask for when receiving treatment. It is based on the best available research and is designed to help ensure the highest-quality care possible.

You can use this list of recommendations to help you and your health care professionals develop a care plan that works for you. You should use this information to become aware of what high-quality care looks like and to ask informed questions about your care. Care plans can be very different for each person, so it is important to work closely with your health care professionals.

Here are some things to consider if you or a loved one is being treated for major depression.

Understanding and Planning Your Care

- You should receive a comprehensive assessment. An assessment means that your care team will want to learn more about you to understand how best to help you. It should include questions about your physical health, your medical history, what medications you're taking, how you spend your time, and how you're feeling.
- You should receive immediate help if you or your health care professional feels you're at risk of harming yourself or someone else. This help might take place at your health care professional's office or in an emergency department.
- You should be given tools and information that help you make treatment decisions with your health care professional.
- In addition to medication and psychotherapy, your health care professional should offer you educational materials about other steps you can take that might improve your depression, such as light therapy, yoga, and exercise.
- If your depression isn't getting better with antidepressants or psychotherapy, you should have access to electroconvulsive therapy.

- You should receive care if you start feeling worse again after treatment.
- You and your family and caregivers should be offered information about your condition, community supports, and crisis services.
- If you move on to a new health care professional, you should each receive a written copy of your care plan from your previous health care professional and your first appointment should be scheduled within a specific timeline. For example, if you have major depression, you should see your new health care professional within 7 days of being discharged from hospital.

Medication

- You should have a choice of psychotherapy or antidepressant drugs. If your depression doesn't get better, you should be offered a combination of the two treatments.
- Your health care professional should monitor you closely.
- If you start on a new antidepressant, your health care professional should closely monitor the therapeutic or side effects of the medication. If your dosage is adjusted or your medications switched, and you're still not feeling better, another therapy should be tried.
- To avoid the risk of your depression coming back, when you're feeling better you should keep taking your antidepressant medication for several months. Your health care professional will work with you to develop this timeline.

Everybody is different, and some recommendations may not apply in your situation. If you have questions about your care, it is important to **speak with your health care professional.**

A more detailed version of this quality standard is available for health care professionals so they can stay current on the newest best evidence. This detailed version is also available to members of the public and can be found on our website.



Looking for more information?

Please see the complete quality standard at www.hqontario.ca and contact us at [qualitystandards@hqontario.ca](https://twitter.com/hqontario) if you have any questions or feedback about this guide.

About Health Quality Ontario

Health Quality Ontario is the provincial advisor on the quality of health care. We are motivated by a single-minded purpose: **Better health for all Ontarians.**

Our quality standards are concise sets of statements outlining the best possible care for patients based on the best available evidence. They are developed in collaboration with clinical experts from across the province and patients and caregivers with lived experience with the condition being discussed.

For more information about Health Quality Ontario and our quality standards, visit: www.hqontario.ca.
