

Anxiety and Depression treatment options

Pros and Cons decision aid



Many people may be adjusting to a change in life circumstances and there is usually no rush to call this depression. Consider the label “adjustment” for now and arrange support.

| Treatment options (consider more than 1 option) | Benefits in 3 months | Risks or consequences |
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| <p>Support from your GP <i>Without</i> lifestyle changes, self help, talking therapies or medication. But you can always opt for lifestyle changes, self help, talking therapies or medication at any time if you are not feeling better with this option.</p> | <p>23% recover in 3 months. 53% recover in 1 year. Talking to your doctor can allow you to work out what helps you to improve your mood and to feel less anxious. This is reasonable for mild and even moderate depression. Many people tend to prefer accessing support from their GP rather than from specialist mental health services.</p> | <p>It may take you longer to recover. You may choose to talk to your GP every couple of weeks or so. It is not the best option for severe depression, since this may delay you getting early, more effective treatment. Your GP will often be only able to offer you 10 minutes at any one appointment.</p> |
| <p>Lifestyle changes It is not just clinical staff who can support you to change your lifestyle. Some people use books, internet guidance, chat rooms, personal trainers or support groups.</p> | <p>26-30% additional benefit beyond the GP support benefits. Exercising sensibly leads to a 26% average improvement. Healthy diet can lead to improvement in 30%. If you do both of these: the benefits are better than a single lifestyle change on its own. Sensible drinking: Depression is much less likely to get better if you are drinking in a hazardous or harmful way. Avoiding substances and smoking: Although there are substantial health benefits to stopping smoking, many smokers argue that stopping smoking would make their mental health worse. This is not true. Cannabis often makes people anxious and paranoid. Physical health improvements are almost inevitable from all of these lifestyle changes. Improving physical health usually gives long term emotional health benefits.</p> | <p>Time and effort commitment. No side effects (except perhaps withdrawal symptoms from alcohol and smoking) Likely to need support to achieve change. Some types of exercise might need a financial investment.</p> |
| <p>Self help Don't forget GP support and lifestyle changes.</p> | <p>Self guided Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) 40% improve (17% more than GP support alone) Computerised CBT 40% improve (17% more than GP support alone) Mindfulness, meditation, yoga and Tai Chi 15% more than GP support alone</p> | <p>No direct harms. Some people find it hard to engage with written material. Some materials can be misleading or even harmful Others prefer audio, computerised or video materials. These may be sponsored by organisations that stand to gain by influencing you. You may be able to join a group eg through an online chat. But your group may not be therapeutic and can occasionally be negative. You would need access to a computer or smartphone and perhaps some support to be able to use it.</p> |
| <p>Talking therapies</p> | <p>41% recover with six sessions eg CBT (18% more than GP support alone) Another 15% had a worthwhile improvement Consider adding medication for an additional 12% benefit</p> | <p>Depending on where you live, access to talking therapies can be slow. You would usually have a telephone appointment straight away to help your therapist to decide with you what type of therapy would best suit you and how quickly they could offer it. Some people can find it difficult, initially, to open up and to talk to a stranger about how they think and feel. Therapists are trained to support you to make the changes that will make you feel better.</p> |
| <p>Placebo medication</p> | <p>38% get a reduction in symptoms (15% more than GP support alone) Vitamin D has known therapeutic benefits for fatigue, widespread pain and physical health - it may be considered for some patients who want a “tonic”.</p> | <p>Many doctors feel ethically that patients should not be given placebo treatments when more effective treatments exist and the patient is keen for medication.</p> |
| <p>Herbal medication</p> | <p>St John’s wort can be effective in mild to moderate depression. It is 15% better than placebo (50% respond in 4-12 weeks)</p> | <p>St John’s wort does not help in severe depression. St John’s wort does interact with a number of commonly used medications so you should consult your GP before you decide to use it. It can cause allergic skin reactions stomach upset, nerve pain and make people sensitive to sunlight and cause burns.</p> |
| <p>Medication</p> | <p>51% get a reduction in symptoms overall. (28% more than GP support alone) Medication is the most effective treatment for severe depression. Some medications slightly suppress appetite and can help with weight loss. Antidepressants are not addictive. Some side effects of medication are helpful. For example they may help you to sleep or eat more. Consider adding talking therapy for an additional 9 % benefit</p> | <p>Minor side effects are common with all types of antidepressants. Many side effects wear off after a few weeks or you may just get used to them. Please follow this link:  to compare the pros and cons of different medications for depression . Although these medications are not addictive there may be withdrawal symptoms for a short time after stopping them. So it is often sensible to wean off them slowly. Most people will use a medication for several months if it is helpful.</p> |