

# Depression Screening

Depression screening is a tool that your health care provider can use to learn if you have symptoms of depression. Depression is a common condition with many symptoms that are also often found in other conditions. Depression is treatable, but it must first be diagnosed. You may not know that certain feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that you are having can be symptoms of depression. Taking a depression screening test can help you and your health care provider decide if you need more assessment, or if you should be referred to a mental health care provider.

## What are the screening tests?

- You may have a physical exam to see if another condition is affecting your mental health. You may have a blood or urine sample taken during the physical exam.
- You may be interviewed using a screening tool that was developed from research, such as one of these:
  - Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ). This is a set of either 2 or 9 questions. A health care provider who has been trained to score this screening test uses a guide to assess if your symptoms suggest that you may have depression.
  - Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D). This is a set of either 17 or 24 questions. You may be asked to take it again during or after your treatment, to see if your depression has gotten better.
  - Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). This is a set of 21 multiple choice questions. Your health care provider scores your answers to assess:
    - Your level of depression, ranging from mild to severe.
    - Your response to treatment.
- Your health care provider may talk with you about your daily activities, such as eating, sleeping, work, and recreation, and ask if you have had any changes in activity.
- Your health care provider may ask you to see a mental health specialist, such as a psychiatrist or psychologist, for more evaluation.

## Who should be screened for depression?

- All adults, including adults with a family history of a mental health disorder.
- Adolescents who are 12–18 years old.
- People who are recovering from a myocardial infarction (MI).
- Pregnant women, or women who have given birth.
- People who have a long-term (*chronic*) illness.
- Anyone who has been diagnosed with another type of a mental health disorder.
- Anyone who has symptoms that could show depression.



## What do my results mean?

Your health care provider will review the results of your depression screening, physical exam, and lab tests. Positive screens suggest that you may have depression. Screening is the first step in getting the care that you may need. It is up to you to get your screening results. Ask your health care provider, or the department that is doing your screening tests, when your results will be ready. Talk with your health care provider about your results and diagnosis.

A diagnosis of depression is made using the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-V). This is a book that lists the number and type of symptoms that must be present for a health care provider to give a specific diagnosis.

Your health care provider may work with you to treat your symptoms of depression, or your health care provider may help you find a mental health provider who can assess, diagnose, and treat your depression.

### **Get help right away if:**

- You have thoughts about hurting yourself or others.

**If you ever feel like you may hurt yourself or others, or have thoughts about taking your own life, get help right away. You can go to your nearest emergency department or call:**

- **Your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.).**
- **A suicide crisis helpline, such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. This is open 24 hours a day.**

### **Summary**

- Depression screening is the first step in getting the help that you may need.
- If your screening test shows symptoms of depression (is *positive*), your health care provider may ask you to see a mental health provider.
- Anyone who is age 12 or older should be screened for depression.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.