



REFERENCES:

This information was summarized or adapted from:
National Cancer Institute. Adjustment to Cancer:
Anxiety and Distress (PDQ®). 2015.

City of Hope Patient SupportScreen education materials for Couples Clinic:
What do I need to know about feeling anxious or fearful?

Department of Supportive Care Medicine
Patient, Family and Community Education

"DEPRESSION WEB CONTENT-HL-EW.DOCX" CHECKED BY HEALTH LITERACY ADVISOR (BUILD 6152) 2017



CityofHope.org

LIFE AFTER CANCER: DEPRESSION

People who have had a serious illness like cancer often feel down or sad. These feelings can be short-lived and pass within a couple of days. This is normal.

Depression, on the other hand, lasts for a long time and causes strong feelings of sadness, irritability or loss of interest in usual activities. It can also interfere with your ability to get through each day.

Depression rarely gets better without professional help. It will not likely go away on its own when cancer treatment ends. It deserves the same care given to any other serious health issue.

[If this sounds like you, please read inside.](#)



SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION INCLUDE:

- Difficulty enjoying things
- Physical symptoms - back pain, headaches, stomachache
- Changes in sleep
- Uncontrollable crying
- Anger
- Fear
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Wanting to get away from everything
- Poor appetite or eating too much
- Feeling hopeless about the future

It is normal to feel cancer-related distress or depression during survivorship, the stage when active cancer treatment is over.

Depression can become worse when family, friends and co-workers expect you to return to “normal” after treatment. Longer recovery times and long-term side effects from cancer treatment can also leave you feeling sad. You may also feel isolated from others because of your experience and changed world view.

Cancer survivors are more likely to feel down and struggle with these feelings around specific times, including:

- Follow-up visits with their doctor or nurse
 - Around “anniversary” dates (one year after diagnosis, treatment, etc.)
 - When thinking about cancer coming back or spreading
- See also *Life After Cancer: Fear of Recurrence* information sheet

These are excellent times to find support.

TAKE ACTION!

- **Ask yourself the questions in the “Do I need help?” box.**
- **If you answer “Yes” to any of the questions, take the next steps:**
 - **Talk with your doctor or nurse.** Tell him/her about what you have been feeling. Make sure to talk about your low mood.

DO I NEED HELP?

- Has your mood been down on most days lately?
- Do you get angry easily?
- Do you find it hard to enjoy much these days?
- Do you feel sluggish? (like you have lost your get-up and go?)
- Do you feel hopeless about the future?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions talk with your health care team today.

- **Be active.** Being physically active can improve sleep, reduce stress, depression and anxiety.
- Find support and supportive services such as: spiritual care, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists or support groups.
- Many people find it helpful when they meet others who have gone through cancer. Some online support groups include:
 - ABCD Breast Cancer Support **800-977-4121** abcdbreastcancersupport.org
 - Imerman Angels One-on-one cancer support **866-IMERMAN (463-7626)** imermanangels.org

RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT CITY OF HOPE

- It is important that you talk with your survivorship health care team about your concerns. Your doctor or nurse practitioner may also be able to refer you to support services such as psychology or psychiatry.
- Talking with a social worker can also help. You can reach a social worker by calling the Division of Clinical Social Work at **626-256-4673, ext. 82282.**
- See also, *How to Get Mental Health* information sheet. It will help you with finding a mental health professional who accepts your health insurance, Medi-Cal or Medicare, to help treat you in your community.
- You may find helpful information and support in the *Sheri & Les Biller Patient and Family Resource Center*. The center offers support groups, classes, music and art therapy and more to help you to deal with your feelings.

SOME SUPPORTIVE PROGRAMS THAT MAY HELP WITH DEPRESSION:

- Yoga
- Massage
- Support Groups
- Mindful Meditation
- Tai Chi
- Guided Meditation Videos

Visit the Supportive Services events calendar for class descriptions, dates and to reserve your spot.

The *Sheri & Les Biller Patient and Family Resource Center* is located on the Duarte campus in the Main Medical building behind the Guest Services desk or you may call **626-218-CARE (2273).**