Tips to avoid Depression

Depression can be severe and life-altering, affecting the quality of life and the happiness of those who live with it. It’s also a common condition. According to the [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](https://www.adaa.org/about-adaa/press-room/facts-statistics), it affects around 15 million Americans every year.

In some cases, it’s possible to prevent depression, even if you’ve already had a previous episode.

There are many lifestyle changes and stress management techniques you can use to prevent or avoid depression. There are certain triggers that can cause us to experience depressive episodes. While triggers may be different for everyone, these are some of the best techniques you can use to prevent or avoid depression relapse.

## 1. Exercise regularly

Exercising regularly is one of the best things you can do for your mental health. [According to the Mayo Clinic](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression-and-exercise/art-20046495), exercise can help in the treatment and prevention of depression in several key ways:

* It  
   increases your body temperature, which can have a calming effect on the central  
   nervous system.
* It  
   releases chemicals like endorphins, which can boost mood.
* It  
   reduces immune system chemicals that may worsen depression.

All types of physical exercise can help treat depression, but it’s best to exercise regularly. To get more exercise, you can:

* Join  
   a sports team or studio (like [yoga](https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/yoga-therapy) or kickboxing), where you’ll be part of a community in addition  
   to being active.
* Take  
   the stairs instead of the elevator.
* Make  
   it a habit: This is the best way to maintain the fitness level that is most  
   effective in preventing depression.

[**Learn more about exercise, depression, and the brain »**](https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/exercise)

## 2. Cut back on social media time

[Research has shownTrusted Source](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4183915/) that increased social media usage can cause or contribute to depression and low self-esteem. Social media can be addicting, and it’s a necessity to stay connected with family, friends, and even coworkers. It’s how we plan and invite each other to events and share big news.

However, limiting social media time can help prevent depression. You can do this by:

* deleting  
   all social apps from your phone
* using  
   website-blocking extensions that only let you use certain sites for a preset  
   amount of time
* only  
   going to social media with a purpose and avoiding logging on several times a  
   day just for something to do

## 3. Build strong relationships

Having a strong support system and an active social life is important for our mental health. [Research has shownTrusted Source](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2169519/) that having even “adequate” social support can protect against depression.

Make sure that you’re regularly connecting with friends and family, even when your lives are busy. Attending social events when you can and finding new hobbies that could help you meet new people can all help you build new relationships too.

## 4. Minimize your daily choices

Have you ever walked into a theme park and been overwhelmed at what you want to do first? Researchers think that having too many choices can actually cause significant stress that can lead to depression.

Psychologist [Barry Schwartz](https://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/bschwar1/Sci.Amer.pdf), author of the book “The Paradox of Choice,” describes research that shows that when faced with too many choices, those who aim to make the best possible choice — “maximizers” — face higher rates of depression.

For many of us, our lives are filled with choices. Which outfit do we wear, and should we buy yogurt or eggs or bagels or English muffins or sausage for breakfast? The pressure of making the right — or wrong — choice is thought to contribute to depression.

If making choices stresses you out, simplify things. You can:

* Learn  
   to be decisive more quickly.
* Reduce  
   the decisions you’ll have to make during the work week: Plan out your outfits,  
   and have your meals prepped and ready to go.

## 5. Reduce stress

Chronic stress is one of the most avoidable common causes of depression. Learning how to [manage and cope with stress](https://www.healthline.com/health-slideshow/10-ways-to-relieve-stress) is essential for optimal mental health.

To manage stress, you can:

* Avoid  
   overcommitting to things.
* Practice  
   mindfulness or meditation.
* Learn  
   to let things go that you can’t control.

[**Continue reading about the best places for guided meditation online »**](https://www.healthline.com/health/meditation-online)

## 6. Maintain your treatment plan

If you’ve already experienced one depressive episode, there’s [a decent chance you’ll experience anotherTrusted Source](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2169519/). That’s why maintaining your treatment plan is so important.

This includes:

* continuing  
   prescription medications, and never stopping them abruptly
* having  
   “maintenance” visits with your therapist every so often when in remission
* consistently  
   practicing the strategies and coping mechanisms your therapist taught you

## 7. Get plenty of sleep

Getting plenty of high-quality sleep is necessary for both mental and physical health. [According to the National Sleep Foundation](https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-disorders-problems/depression-and-sleep), people with insomnia have a tenfold risk of developing depression compared to those who sleep well.

To get better sleep, you can:

* not  
   look at any screens for two hours before bed (including your phone!)
* meditate  
   before bed
* have  
   a comfortable mattress
* avoid  
   caffeine after noon

## 8. Stay away from toxic people

We’ve all met that person who just makes us feel bad about ourselves. Sometimes they’re an outright bully, and other times they subtly put us down to make themselves feel better. They may even be someone who takes advantage of us. Regardless of the specific situation, toxic people should be avoided at all costs. They can lower our self-esteem.

One [study from 2012](http://www.pnas.org/content/109/6/1878.abstract) found that negative social interactions were linked to higher levels of two proteins known as cytokines. These two proteins are associated with inflammation as well as depression.

To avoid toxic people, you should:

* Stay  
   away from anyone who makes you feel worse about yourself.
* Cut  
   people out of your life who take advantage of you.
* Know  
   the signs. If someone spreads rumors or talks badly about someone as soon as  
   they leave the room, they’re likely to do the same for you.

## 9. Eat well

[Recent research](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/03/150326110954.htm) has shown that regularly consuming a high-fat diet can have similar effects as chronic stress in terms of causing depression. In addition, an unhealthy diet can also deprive your body of vital nutrients it needs to maintain physical and mental health.

To prevent depression with your diet, you should:

* Eat  
   balanced meals with lean protein, and lots of fruits and vegetables.
* Reduce  
   [high-sugar](https://www.healthline.com/health/diabetes/food-secretly-loaded-with-sugar) and high-fat foods.
* Eliminate  
   processed foods from your diet as much as possible.
* Incorporate  
   more omega-3s into your diet, with foods like salmon or nuts.