




# Achieve Your Best Health

*Health Coaching for Depression*



Focus on life. Focus on health. *Stay focused.*



**BlueChoice<sup>®</sup>**  
**HealthPlan**  
South Carolina

An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association



# What Is Health Coaching?

Health coaching is a voluntary program for members living with certain health conditions. We take a personalized and tailored approach that helps you manage your condition and cope with everyday issues so you can meet your health goals. You'll have a personal coach to support, guide and motivate you.

Your coach can:

- Help identify behaviors and actions to achieve and maintain your health goals.
- Help you find a physician if you don't have one.
- Personalize your plan for better health.
- Help you get the most out of your health benefits.

## Is Health Coaching For Me?

Health coaching is especially helpful to members who:

- Want to know more about managing their health condition(s).
- Want to communicate more effectively with their health care provider(s).

## Your Personal Health Coach

Each health coach is a health care professional with extensive training and knowledge. Your personal coach is a partner who can guide and support you to make positive lifestyle changes to better manage your health.

## We Are Here For You

We understand that managing a behavioral health condition can be complicated. You can feel confident knowing your coach is there to support you each step of the way. Also, your personal information is safe. Your health coach is a professional who respects your privacy and will keep the details of your action plan confidential.

Our health coaches care about you and want to help you reach your health goals. Your coach can provide the encouragement, support and education you need. He or she can help you identify the barriers that keep you from reaching your health goals, adopt healthy habits that fit your lifestyle and connect you with other helpful resources.

As you take steps to manage your health, you may face challenges. But you can overcome them with the help of your friends, family and our health coaching team.





# What Do You Need To Know About Depression?

If you suffer from depression, you are not alone. Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses, affecting more than 19 million Americans each year. You cannot simply “snap out” of depression. Like any serious illness, depression needs to be treated.

## Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of depression vary from person to person. The earlier you recognize the signs of depression and seek help, the better. Remember, the first step to defeating depression is recognizing it. Here is a list of some of the most common symptoms of depression:

- A persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities, including sex
- Decreased energy, fatigue, feeling “slowed down”
- Sleep problems (insomnia, oversleeping, early morning waking)
- Eating problems (loss of appetite or weight, weight gain)
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Thoughts of death or suicide, a suicide attempt
- Recurring aches and pains that don’t respond to medical treatment

Most of us will experience some of these symptoms at some point. If you experience five or more of these symptoms for two weeks or longer, however, you should seek help from a professional.



## What Can You Do To Keep Your Symptoms Under Control?

If left untreated, depression can be devastating. It can cause problems at work, damage relationships and even lead to death or suicide. The good news is that depression is treatable. Treatment for depression can be extremely effective in controlling symptoms. Common treatment for depression includes a combination of medication and therapy.

### Take Medications As Prescribed

To manage your depression, your doctor may prescribe an antidepressant medication. Take all medications as prescribed. Call your doctor immediately if you have any problems.

It is important to remember that medication alone is not a “cure” for depression. The best treatment plans include both medication and therapy to help you develop better skills to cope with the ups and downs of life. Therapy gives you the tools to cope with life’s difficulties, monitor your progress and deal with any problems in your personal and professional life.



# Your Relationship With Your Health Care Team Is Important.

The best thing for managing depression is to develop a good relationship with your health care team, which may include your primary care physician, a psychiatrist, a health coach and others. Keeping open communication with your health care team is important and helps you play an active role in your care.

## During Your Visit

Questions for your health care team may include:

- Are there any side effects of my medications? Is there anything I can do about them?
- Should I make any changes to my diet or lifestyle?
- When should I come back for a follow-up appointment?





# Tips For A Healthy Lifestyle

## Nutrition

**Eating right can play a big role in staying healthy.** Making smart choices at mealtime can help you maintain a healthy weight and feel your best.

**Minimize how much caffeine you have.** Caffeine has a significant impact on behavior. Too much caffeine can make you edgy or irritable.

**Be aware of the effects that alcohol can have on your body and your medications.** Alcohol can disrupt sleep and affect your moods. Combining certain medications with alcohol can be very dangerous.

**Avoid high-fat and overly salty meals.** These foods can lead to obesity, high blood pressure and other medical conditions. Opt for healthy fats like those found in fish, avocados and nuts.

**Try to keep your blood sugar level even.** Avoid sugar and refined foods, as much as possible. Eat more whole foods, fruits and vegetables. Eating smaller meals every few hours can help you maintain an even blood sugar level.





## Exercise

Exercise has a big role in managing depression. There is a direct relationship between how much exercise you get and how you feel. Exercise can improve your mood, promote better sleep and help you lead an overall healthy lifestyle.

**Here are some tips on incorporating exercise into your daily life:**

**Exercise with a friend.** If you do not already work out, you can make it more interesting by choosing a team sport or working out with a friend or coworker.

**Pick a type of exercise you enjoy.** You are more likely to stick with something you like doing. If you're not a big fan of running or biking, you could try swimming or dancing.

"I am so glad we have a program available to us and that I can call with any questions. I think I am doing a good job, but it is nice to know that I can call when I need to."

– Health coaching participant

**Start slowly and work your way up.** Try not to push yourself too hard in the beginning. Find a comfortable pace and gradually increase your activity.

**Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program.** Your overall health may dictate what type of exercise you can do. That's why you should always check with your doctor before starting an exercise regimen.

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# Participant's Bill of Rights

Health coaches respect the wishes of participants and their family members and recognize that participants have RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES, including the:

- Right to know the philosophy and characteristics of the health coaching program.
- Right to have personally identifiable health information shared by the health coaching program only in accordance with state and federal law.
- Right to identify a staff member and his or her job title, and to speak with a supervisor of a staff member, if requested.
- Right to receive accurate information from the health coaching program.
- Right to receive administrative information about changes in or termination of the health coaching program.
- Right to decline participation, revoke consent or withdraw at any time.
- Responsibility to submit any forms necessary to participate in the program, to the extent the law requires.
- Responsibility to give accurate clinical and contact information, and to notify the health coaching program of changes in this information.
- Responsibility to notify their treating providers of their participation in the health coaching program, if applicable.

Health coaches inform members of these rights and uphold them at all times during the program. All members receive a written copy of these rights and responsibilities within 30 days of program enrollment.

## You Make the Choice

Your decision to participate will not affect your health benefits in any way. If you decide that having a personal health coach is not for you, you can opt out of the program at any time by calling [800-868-1032](tel:800-868-1032), ext. 25835. If you have a problem or complaint during your health coaching experience, you can call [800-868-1032](tel:800-868-1032), ext. 25835 and ask to speak to the program manager. In an emergency, please contact your doctor or call 911.



# Additional Resources

For additional information about living well with depression, you can contact these resources. These organizations are independent companies or agencies that provide health information on behalf of your health plan.

## **Mental Health America (MHA)**

800-826-3632

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

## **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

800-950-6264

[www.NAMI.org](http://www.NAMI.org)

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

877-726-4727

[www.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.SAMHSA.gov)

*These links lead to third party websites. Those companies are solely responsible for the contents and privacy policies on their sites.*

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The information contained in this brochure is for educational purposes only. It does not represent a standard of care. Your physician must determine the appropriateness of the information in light of all your circumstances. It is important to discuss options with your physician when deciding on the best treatment for you.