Information for adults who use NHS services for depression

The NICE quality standard for depression sets out what high-quality care in the NHS in England should include, so that the best care can be offered to adults with depression (including people with a long-term physical health problem) using NHS services in England.

NICE quality standard for depression in adults

The quality standard for depression in adults is made up of 13 statements that describe high-quality care for patients. These statements are about the best care you should receive and are summarised below.

1. People who may have depression receive an assessment to find out how severe their symptoms are, how much they are affected by the depression and how long it has lasted for.

2. People with depression receive suitable treatment for the right length of time from competent staff.

3. People with depression have their progress checked at each appointment to help decide on how best to continue with treatments.

4. People with some mild but long-lasting symptoms of depression or with mild to moderate depression receive appropriate psychological treatment, for example a self-help programme (undertaken alone or, if the person has a long-term physical health problem, in a group), a group exercise programme, or a treatment using a computer called ‘computerised cognitive behavioural therapy’ (or CCBT for short).
5. People with some mild but long-lasting symptoms of depression or mild depression are not usually prescribed antidepressants except in particular circumstances (for example, if they have had moderate or severe depression in the past; have depression that have lasted for a long time – usually at least 2 years; still have depression after other treatments; or if treatment of a physical health problem is made more difficult because of mild depression).

6. People with moderate or severe depression and no long-term physical health problems receive antidepressants along with psychological treatments (either a treatment called ‘cognitive behavioural therapy’, or CBT for short, or a treatment called ‘interpersonal therapy’, or IPT for short).

7. People with moderate depression and a long-term physical health problem receive appropriate psychological treatment (for example, group or one-to-one CBT, or a treatment for people with a regular partner called ‘behavioural couples therapy’, if appropriate).

8. People with severe depression and a long-term physical health problem receive antidepressants along with one-to-one CBT.

9. People with moderate to severe depression and a long-term physical health problem affecting their everyday life, whose symptoms have not improved after early treatments, receive ‘collaborative care’, which means that a dedicated team of healthcare professionals work together to treat the depression and the physical health problem.

10. People with depression who are feeling better after taking antidepressants are advised to keep taking them for at least 6 months, and up to at least 2 years if their symptoms are likely to return.

11. People with depression treated only with antidepressants are checked at least every 2 to 4 weeks for the first 3 months of treatment or longer.
12. People with depression whose symptoms have not much improved 6 to 8 weeks after starting treatment have their treatment plan reviewed.

13. People who have been treated for depression who have remaining symptoms or whose symptoms are likely to return receive further suitable psychological treatment.

You can read full details on the advice from NICE on depression in adults here www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG90/PublicInfo and on depression in adults with a long-term physical health problem here www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG91/PublicInfo.

Your care

In the NHS, patients and healthcare professionals have rights and responsibilities as set out in the NHS Constitution (www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/NHSConstitution/index.htm). All NICE quality standards are written to reflect these. You have the right to be involved in discussions and make informed decisions about your treatment and care with your healthcare team. Your choices are important and healthcare professionals should support these wherever possible. You should be treated with dignity and respect.
Information from NICE about depression in adults

The full quality standard for depression in adults, written for healthcare professionals, is available from www.nice.org.uk.

NICE also produces guidance (advice) for the NHS in England and Wales about preventing, diagnosing and treating medical conditions, based on the best available evidence.

NICE has produced guidance on depression in adults, available from www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG90, and on depression in adults with a long-term physical health problem, available from www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG91. The guidance was used, along with other sources of information, to develop this quality standard.

Information for patients and carers about the care and treatment recommended in the NICE guidance on depression in adults, and the guidance on depression in adults with a long-term physical health problem, is available from www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG90/PublicInfo and www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG91/PublicInfo. The information is written to help patients, their families and carers to understand the care and treatment options that should be available in the NHS.

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