

# VIVA HEALTH<sup>®</sup> Connection

— SPRING/SUMMER 2020 —

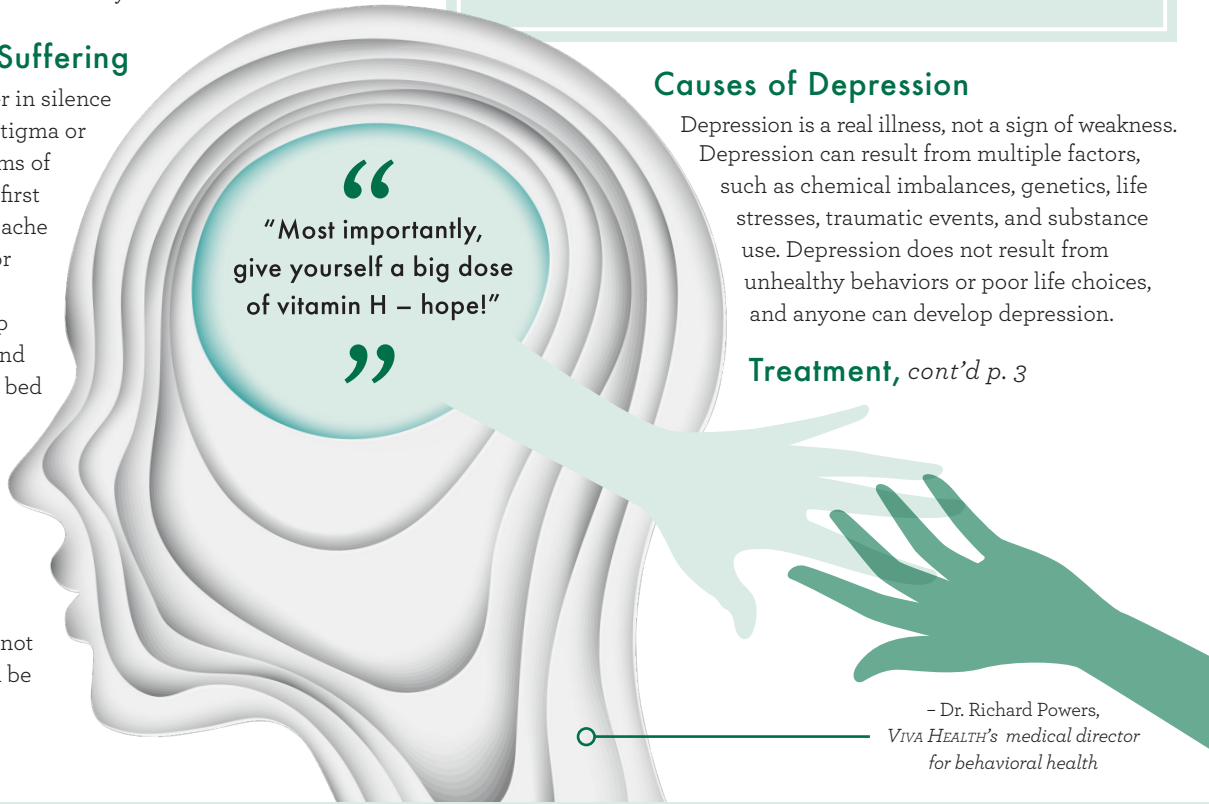
## Depression – A Real Illness, Not a Sign of Weakness

We all have periods when we are sad or don't feel like ourselves, especially when we are under severe stress or are dealing with difficult life situations. But if you feel down most of the time or for long stretches, you should talk with your doctor. You may have depression or even another medical problem, such as thyroid disease. If you have clinical depression, your symptoms should improve with simple outpatient treatment.

Depression is a common mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in activities. It affects how you feel, think, and act. Depression may cause anxiety and even panic attacks that will also improve by treating the underlying depression. According to the World Health Organization, depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide.

## Depression Causes Suffering

Depressed people often suffer in silence with their symptoms due to stigma or embarrassment. The symptoms of depression are similar to the first few days of the flu, when you ache all over and have no energy or interest; when food does not appeal to you; when you sleep a lot but you are not rested; and when you just want to stay in bed with covers over your head. Unlike the flu, depression will not go away in a week or two. The symptoms can persist for months or years. Depression will plant the false idea that you will never get better and treatment will not help. However, nothing could be further from the truth!



“Most importantly,  
give yourself a big dose  
of vitamin H – hope!”

## Symptoms of Depression

Depression may be diagnosed when two or more of the following symptoms persist for more than two weeks:

- o Feeling sad, anxious, or empty
- o Feeling hopeless or pessimistic
- o Feeling guilty, worthless, or helpless
- o Not enjoying what you used to enjoy
- o Trouble with concentration, memory, or making decisions
- o Sleeping too much or too little
- o Appetite changes – reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain
- o Feeling restless or irritable
- o Thoughts of suicide or death

## Causes of Depression

Depression is a real illness, not a sign of weakness. Depression can result from multiple factors, such as chemical imbalances, genetics, life stresses, traumatic events, and substance use. Depression does not result from unhealthy behaviors or poor life choices, and anyone can develop depression.

**Treatment, *cont'd* p. 3**

— Dr. Richard Powers,  
VIVA HEALTH's medical director  
for behavioral health

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# Healthy MIND + BODY



## A Message from Dr. Tara M. Bryant, *VIVA HEALTH's Chief Medical Officer*



### Healthy Mind, Healthy Body – It Takes Both to Live Your Best Life

You know how important it is to take care of your physical health by making good food choices, exercising regularly, taking your medications, and visiting your primary care provider at least once a year for your wellness exam. But did you know that to make sure your body is in the best shape possible, you must also focus on your mental health? The mind and the body work hand in hand. When one isn't working well, the other won't either.

Setting aside time to read, do crossword puzzles or Sudoku (see page 3), and socialize with friends and family are just as important as planning for a workout or weekly meal prep. Face-to-face conversations, whether in person or over the phone through video chat, stimulate brain activity. Learning a new language or playing a musical instrument improves memory and thought processes.

If you are feeling sad, lonely, or depressed, it's hard to make yourself take a walk or even do a word search. When you see your primary care provider, you should receive a short questionnaire or be asked how often you've felt down, helpless, or had little interest in doing things that used to bring you joy. It's important that you answer these questions truthfully so your doctor can provide you with the necessary treatments to help you feel better. It takes both a strong mind and a fit body to live your best life. See the Healthy Mind & Healthy Body Checklist below for a quick overview of what you can do to ensure you are physically and mentally sound, and give your brain a workout by completing the Sudoku puzzle on the next page.

*Tara M. Bryant, M.D., BSN*

Tara M. Bryant, M.D., B.S.N.

### Dr. Bryant's Healthy Mind & Healthy Body Checklist

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Socializing regularly with family and friends                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Screening for depression, colon cancer (ages 50+), mammogram (women ages 40+), and osteoporosis (women ages 65-85) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercising your brain often with hobbies like reading, puzzles, and crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a yearly diabetic eye exam and lab tests for 3-month blood sugar levels for diabetics                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling a yearly wellness exam with your primary care provider (PCP)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking to your PCP if you have trouble taking your medications as directed  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asking your PCP about a healthy exercise plan                              |   |



# Hope for Depression

## Treatment Works



From p. 1 Depression

### Treatment

Depression is a treatable condition. The two most common treatment methods are talking therapy, called psychotherapy, and antidepressant medications. Cognitive-behavioral therapy helps identify and correct negative thought patterns. Interpersonal therapy looks at the relationships that might cause or worsen depression. Antidepressant medications can improve mood and energy by correcting chemical imbalances in the brain without causing addiction or emotional numbing. For severe depression, a combination of psychotherapy and antidepressants has proven to be most effective.

"Most importantly, give yourself a big dose of vitamin H – hope," said Dr. Richard Powers, VIVA HEALTH's medical director for behavioral health. "Depression often robs a person of hope, but treatment works in most people if they persist in care. If your loved one seems to have depression, encourage them to seek help and overcome that hopeless feeling."

Start by talking to your primary care provider (PCP) or your mental health provider. A depression screening is often part of an annual wellness visit, which is covered without any cost-sharing for VIVA HEALTH members in plans with preventive services covered at 100%. You will be charged either a PCP or specialist copayment for follow-up care, depending on who treats you.

### Lifestyle choices can help ease depression:

- o Getting some physical activity every day
- o Eating healthfully
- o A diet low in fat, sugar, and salt can be helpful. By eating foods rich in antioxidants, you can lessen the destructive effects of depression. Antioxidant-rich foods include cantaloupe, carrots, collards, kiwi, nuts and seeds, oranges, peaches, pumpkin, spinach, sweet potato, and tomatoes.
- o Limiting alcohol intake
- o Getting enough sleep
- o Knowing your triggers and symptoms, and seeking help early
- o Managing stress

### How to find a mental health provider

- ▶ Go to [www.myvivaprovider.com](http://www.myvivaprovider.com) and select "Commercial Search."
- ▶ Select "Doctor Search."
- ▶ On the doctor search page, filter by "mental health providers" in the Specialties categories to see both psychologists and psychiatrists. You can filter by "psychiatry" if you only want to find psychiatrists. You can add other filters, such as the county or general area where you are looking.
- ▶ If you are in a plan with a limited provider network, please be sure to filter by the network related to your employer plan.
- ▶ Most VIVA HEALTH plans do not require a referral from a primary care provider to see a specialist such as a mental health provider, but some do. Even if you do not need a referral, your PCP may be able to refer you to a mental health provider if you don't know who to pick. Make sure to verify that the person you are being referred to is a participating provider within your VIVA HEALTH network.

			1			9	4	
	4		7	8	3	2	1	
	9		6	5		8		3
	8			6				
					2	1	3	
					3	5		
	5	7			2	4	8	
	1	6			9		5	
				4	1			7

Level: medium

See pg 5 for the answers to this puzzle.

# Postpartum Mood Disorders

What you are feeling may be more than the “baby blues”



**So many changes occur after having a new baby that new mothers may ignore warning signs about their own mental health.**

**New moms assume that what they are feeling and the thoughts they are having are just the “new normal.”** While most new mothers experience some form of the “baby blues” for a short period after delivery, the issue may be more serious and longer lasting.

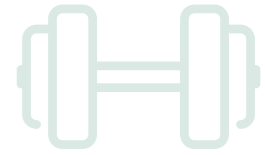
**Approximately 15% of new mothers experience postpartum depression.** Possible symptoms include depressed mood, excessive crying, difficulty bonding with your baby, guilt, thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, intense irritability or anger. This is not an exhaustive list; you should discuss your symptoms with your health care provider.

While postpartum depression has become more widely discussed and treated, another postpartum mood disorder, postpartum anxiety, is often left undiagnosed and seldom discussed. Of course it is normal to worry about your new baby, but sometimes the worry turns into something more. **Postpartum anxiety symptoms include** constant worrying, fear of terrible things happening to your baby, sleep disruption, and racing thoughts.

**Treatment for both postpartum depression and postpartum anxiety may include medication and counseling.** Other postpartum mood disturbances exist as well, such as postpartum obsessive compulsive disorder. In very rare cases – estimates range from **1 in 500 to 1 in 1,000** – new mothers develop postpartum psychosis. Symptoms include confusion, disorganized behavior, attempts to harm yourself or your baby, and hallucinations or delusions. Postpartum psychosis carries significant risk to the infant and mother and is considered a medical emergency. Treatment should be sought immediately and often involves inpatient psychiatric hospitalization.

**If you suspect you may have a problem, contact your doctor to share what you are experiencing.** It may be difficult to discuss these feelings with your friends and family, but your doctor should be able to provide the support and help you need during this challenging time.

# Physical Fitness – Exercise Your Way to Improved Mental Health



**Having a regular exercise routine can be as helpful for your mental health as it is for your physical well-being.**

Physical activity not only helps with depression and anxiety, but it also boosts self-esteem and fosters confidence. Taking part in a form of physical activity that you really enjoy can give you a goal and sense of purpose.

**Some of the many benefits of being physically active are:**

- o Less tension, stress, and mental fatigue
- o Natural energy boost
- o Improved sleep
- o A sense of achievement and having fun
- o Increased focus and motivation
- o Less anger or frustration
- o Healthy appetite
- o Better social life
- o Detoxifying the body

Something as simple as going for a walk is a great way to stay fit. In the Birmingham area, take advantage of the many free or low-cost options to walk outside in a beautiful environment, such as:

- o Railroad Park and the Rotary Trail
- o Ruffner Mountain
- o Red Mountain Park
- o Oak Mountain State Park
- o Walking paths at Jemison Park, Lakeshore Trail, and Vulcan Trail

**Where are the walking options where you live? If the weather is not nice and you do not belong to a gym, check out online resources such as yoga and workout tutorials on YouTube, Netflix, and other sources.**



## Sudoku Answers

3	8	1	2	7	6	9	4	5
4	5	7	8	3	9	2	1	6
9	2	6	5	4	1	8	7	3
8	1	3	6	5	4	7	2	9
6	4	5	9	2	7	1	3	8
7	9	2	1	8	3	5	6	4
5	7	9	3	6	2	4	8	1
1	6	4	7	9	8	3	5	2
2	3	8	4	1	5	6	9	7

# Sleep – Catching More Zzzzs Can Improve Your Overall Health



## Sleep isn't a luxury; it is a necessity for your overall health.

You may think you will be more productive if you have more waking hours in the day and sacrifice sleep. In reality, over time you will become less productive without adequate sleep. The number of “short sleepers” (one who sleeps less than 6 hours a night) has increased significantly in the United States over the past 30 years, according to the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Not allowing your body the rest it needs leads to sleep deprivation. Sleep deprivation can contribute to obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Sleep deprivation also can have a major impact on job performance and decision-making ability and weaken your immune system.

Take steps to ensure your body gets quality sleep each night. Small changes to your sleep environment, such as fresh bedding, cool temperatures, and low noise levels can help increase your sleep quality.

**Sleep is a foundation for all areas of your health – mental, physical, and emotional. On average, adults should receive 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Sleep helps you:**

- Build immunity and fight infection
- Perform well at school and work
- Rejuvenate and restore your body
- Improve physical and mental health



When your body receives the required sleep it needs, you are able to function more wholly. Your brain functions better and you are able to think more clearly because the brain works to restore itself during sleep. Sleep also provides opportunity for your tissues and muscles to repair and grow.

## Healthy Sleep *Tips:*

**Help your body, help you. Set a goal to reward your body with the required sleep it needs for a week, and see the difference it makes in your daily life.**

- Make sleep a priority in your schedule
- Stick to a sleep schedule
- Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual
- Exercise daily
- Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows
- Turn off electronics before bed

# Food for Thought – Keep your brain healthy and improve memory and concentration by adding these foods to your meal plan.

**Fatty Fish** (salmon, trout, sardines) – Omega-3 fatty acids

**Coffee** – Antioxidants, caffeine

**Blueberries** – Antioxidants, anti-inflammatory

**Turmeric** – Antioxidants, anti-inflammatory

**Broccoli** – Vitamin K, antioxidants, anti-inflammatory

**Pumpkin seeds** – Antioxidants, high in brain-benefitting minerals like zinc

**Dark chocolate** – Flavonoids, antioxidants, caffeine

**Nuts** – Vitamin E, antioxidants; walnuts add Omega-3

**Oranges** – Rich in Vitamin C

**Eggs** – Vitamins B6 and B12, folate, choline

**Green Tea** – Polyphenols, antioxidants

Source: Kerri-Ann Jennings, MS, RD in [healthline.com](http://healthline.com)



## Boost Your Brain Power with these Recipes

### Brainy Broccoli Salad

*This modern take on old-school broccoli salad includes several foods believed to improve brain health and functioning – broccoli, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, and blueberries. Follow your preference for a dressing. Adjust quantities and ingredients to suit your taste.*

- 1 head broccoli, cut into small florets
- ½ small red onion, peeled and sliced into ¼-inch-wide half-moons
- ½ cup walnuts, toasted
- ¼ cup pumpkin seeds, toasted
- 4 oz. blueberries
- ¼ cup dried fruit  
(cranberries, golden raisins, diced apricot)
- Pinch of salt

*If you don't like raw broccoli, blanch the florets in boiling salted water 1-2 minutes, drain and plunge broccoli in a bath of ice water to stop cooking and retain color. After a few minutes, drain the broccoli, shaking the colander to remove excess moisture.*

*Place onions in a colander. Run hot water over them for 45 seconds, and then cold water for 30 seconds. This reduces the raw onion flavor. Place onions between sheets of paper towel to help dry.*

*In a mixing bowl, combine broccoli, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, blueberries, and dried fruit. Gradually add sliced onion until the proportion looks right; you may prefer less. Sprinkle with salt and toss salad. Chill before tossing with dressing and serving.*

### Turmeric Trout

*Trout is especially high in brain-building Omega 3 fatty acids. Turmeric, a staple in Indian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern cooking, is a potent antioxidant and an anti-inflammatory. Turmeric is a main ingredient in curry spice mixes, and curry flavors this fish. Serve with rice pilaf and vegetables. Serves four.*

- 1 Tbsp. canola or other neutral oil
- 1 Tbsp. curry powder
- Salt to taste
- 4 trout filets, skin on
- 1 Tbsp. butter or Indian ghee

*Mix oil, curry powder, and salt, adjusting the flavors to your taste. Brush this curry paste mixture onto the flesh side of the trout filets. Allow to marinate 5-15 minutes.*

*Melt butter or ghee in a skillet over medium heat. When fat starts to bubble, sprinkle salt on the skin and place it in the pan, skin side down with the thin end of the fish running slightly up the side of the pan so it doesn't overcook. (Head end takes longer to cook because it is thicker.) Two filets will fit in a regular-sized skillet.*

*Cook 4 minutes and then gently flip. Cook fish 1-2 minutes more, depending on thickness. Fish should be firm but give slightly when pressed with a finger.*





417 20th Street North  
Suite 1100  
Birmingham, Alabama 35203

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In this issue of \_\_\_\_\_

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**VIVA HEALTH, Inc.**  
417 20th Street North, Suite 1100  
Birmingham, AL 35203



**After hours:**  
*VIVA HEALTH's on-call nurse:*  
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