What is a family health history?
A family health history is a portrait of the shared lives and health of your extended family.

Screening recommendations

... for individuals WITH A FAMILY HISTORY of depression

- Be aware that depression and other mood disorders run in families.
- Family history is a risk factor for depression according to the National Institute of Mental Health, the American Psychiatric Association, and the National Mental Health Association. The specific screening guidelines for people with a family history of depression are the same as the screening guidelines for people with no known family history of depression.

... for individuals WITH NO KNOWN FAMILY HISTORY of depression

- Individuals with any of the following symptoms should be screened by their health care provider: persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood; feelings of hopelessness, guilt, or worthlessness; loss of interest in activities that once brought pleasure; decreased energy; difficulty concentrating or making decisions; insomnia or oversleeping; weight loss or weight gain; irritability; thoughts of suicide; or persistent physical symptoms that don’t respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders or physical pain.
Depression risk factors and what you can do about them

Things you can change

- **Diet:** A diet high in fat and calories and low in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits can increase risk
- **Exercise:** An inactive lifestyle increases risk
- **Stress:** Increases risk
- **Substance abuse:** Increases risk
- **Environmental factors:** Living with violence, neglect, abuse, or poverty increases risk

Things you can't change

- **Family history:** Children or siblings of individuals with major depression are more likely to develop it themselves
- **Age:** Risk increases with age
- **Sex:** Women experience depression about twice as often as men
- **Accompanying diseases such as stroke, heart attack, Parkinson’s disease, and hormonal disorders:** Increases risk
- **Menstrual cycle changes:** Pregnancy, postpartum period, miscarriage, pre-menopause, and menopausal periods can increase risk

What can you do if you have a family history of depression?

- Eat a balanced diet including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats
- Be active
- Drink less alcohol and don’t use illegal drugs
- Talk to your health care provider about your family health history of depression
- See your health care provider for regular screening and risk assessment
- Follow the advice of your health care provider

Sources

- National Cancer Institute, www.cancer.gov

If you require this document in another format, such as large print, Braille or cassette tape, call 651-201-3609.