



Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

DEPRESSION

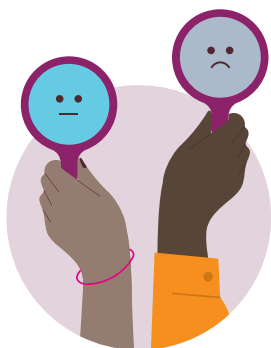


Plainer language series

Depression is a mental illness. It affects the way you feel, which is called your mood. Depression also affects other mental and physical sensations. Depression makes it hard to feel happy or to enjoy things. Some people feel depression as like a heavy, strong feeling of sadness. Other people feel depression as emptiness or anger.

Doctors call depression major depressive disorder but many people just say depression.

If you are thinking about ending your life, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. If you think that a loved one is in danger, call 9-1-1.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND SADNESS?

We all have bad days. It is normal to feel sad when something bad happens. Normal sadness goes away on its own.

Depression is different from a bad day. Depression can start at any time. It lasts for at least several weeks. Depression includes at least five of the signs below.

Signs of depression

- Feeling sad or down
- Feeling hopeless, like things will not get better
- Feeling empty, like you have no emotions
- Feeling irritated or angry
- Thinking that things will not get better
- Thinking that nothing makes you happy any more
- Thinking that problems are your fault
- Thinking that you are not good enough
- Thinking about dying or ending your life
- Having a hard time thinking clearly, concentrating or making decisions
- No longer liking things you used to like
- Eating much less or eating much more than usual
- Trouble falling asleep or sleeping more than usual
- Feeling tired or run down most of the time
- Feeling restless, like you cannot sit still
- Having aches and pains that do not seem to be caused by another health problem

WHEN DOES DEPRESSION AFFECT PEOPLE?

Depression can start at any time. There are times when you are more likely to develop depression.

Depression can start when you are very upset or under a lot of stress. For example, it can start when you worry a lot about money or lose your job.

Depression can start when you have a lot of changes in your life. For example, it can start when you move to a new city or when you have relationship problems.

Depression can start when you feel lonely. It can start when you do not have many people to talk to.

Depression can go along with another health problem. For example, depression can start when people have a thyroid problem, head injury, or heart disease.

For some, depression may occur at a certain time. When it happens at a certain time of year, it is called seasonal depression or seasonal affective disorder. When it happens during pregnancy or after childbirth, it is called postpartum depression.

You cannot give yourself depression. It is not your fault.



WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT DEPRESSION?

If you think that you have depression, talk to a doctor or a counsellor. They will work to see what is causing these feelings.

If your doctor says that you are depressed, you can start treatment. There are many



different and good treatments for depression. Your treatment plan will depend on the type of depression you have. It will also depend on your own wishes.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is also called therapy. It is very good for depression. In psychotherapy, you talk through problems with a trained mental health expert like a counsellor. Your counsellor helps you learn new skills to deal with problems. You work together until you can use the skills on your own. There are many different therapies for depression. A common therapy is called cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Your doctor can help you find a counsellor. Your school or workplace may also have a program to help you find a counsellor. You can also learn skills in books, online or through support groups.



Medication

Medications called antidepressants are often used to treat depression. They can be very helpful and are safe. There are many different kinds of antidepressants. Your doctor will suggest a medication based on your needs. In BC, doctors and psychiatrists can prescribe medication for depression.

Medication tips

- Tell your doctor if you take other medications, vitamins, or herbs like St. John's Wort. Some medications do not work well together. Some herbs interact with medications. This can cause dangerous health problems.
- Everyone's body is different. Most people try a few different medications before they find what works.
- It takes time for medications to start working. Talk to your doctor about what to expect.
- Follow your doctor's instructions. Ask questions if you do not understand what your doctor says.

- All medications have side effects. Two examples of side effects are a headache or a change in the way you sleep. Talk to your doctor if side effects are a problem.
- Once you start taking medication, do not suddenly stop taking it. Talk to your doctor first.
- Take your medication until your doctor says it is safe to stop, even if you feel well. People usually take medication for some time after they feel better. This can help to stop depression from coming back.

Support groups

Support groups are places to connect with other people. You can meet people who are dealing with the same problem as you. You can also share information and learn from others. There are different kinds of support groups. To find support groups in your community:



- Ask a doctor or counsellor
- Contact the Mood Disorders Association of BC. You can find the contact information at www.mdabc.net
- Contact your local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. You can find the contact information at www.cmha.bc.ca

Other treatments

Some herbs and vitamins may also help. Exercise and changes to your diet may also help treat depression. Be sure to talk to your doctor about other treatments you want to try. Some treatments do not work well with other treatments.

Self-care

Self-care includes small things you do every day to take care of your health and feel your best. You can do these things along with other treatments. Here are some things to try:

- Try to get enough sleep every night. Sleep has a big effect on moods. It is hard to deal with problems or see the good side of things when you are tired. If you cannot sleep well, talk to a doctor.
- Find ways to relax. Activities that lower stress can also help you cope with depression. Yoga or meditation may help.
- Try to get some exercise every day. Exercise can really help manage depression. Even small changes, like walking to a bus stop that is farther away, can make a big difference.
- Try to eat well. Eating too much fast food or junk food may not help you feel your best. Eating well can be hard when you feel depressed so just try your best. If healthy eating is hard for you, you can talk to a dietitian for free at HealthlinkBC. A dietitian can help you make a healthy eating plan. Call 8-1-1 to talk to a dietitian. Say the name of the language you need in English to get an interpreter.
- Avoid alcohol or other drugs. Alcohol and drugs worsen depression. They can also stop medication from working properly. If you having a hard time reducing your drinking of alcohol or your drug use, talk to a doctor or counsellor.



RECOVERING FROM DEPRESSION

Recovery means returning to good mental health. Overcoming depression happens in stages over time. It may take some time go get back into your old routine. Remember that you are dealing with a health problem. It is okay to ask for help. It is okay to take time to care for yourself.

If you have had depression, there is a chance that it might come back. This is called a relapse. When you feel better, it is a good idea to talk to your doctor or counsellor about relapse. You can work together to lower the risk of relapse. If you do start to notice that signs of depression are coming back, you can act before it becomes a big problem.

Where can I learn more about depression?

Talk to a doctor first if you think you are dealing with depression. Next, you can learn more about depression from these resources:

Mood Disorders Association of BC

The Mood Disorders Association is for people who have depression and other mood problems. They have support groups and other programs to help people. The Mood Disorders Association has groups across BC. To find a group in your community, visit their website at www.mdabc.net or call 604-873-0103.



BC Partners for Mental Health and Substance Use Information

Visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca for information sheets and other useful information. You can learn more about depression and other problems. You can read stories and connect with others who are dealing with depression. There are three booklets to help you: dealing with a diagnosis of depression (when your doctor says you have depression), working with your doctor, and preventing relapse of depression. These booklets are available in English only. You can also learn more about mental health organizations in BC.

BC Mental Health Support Line

This phone service can help you when you are worried, stressed or upset. They can help with a lot of other problems, too. They can help you find services in your community. You can also call if you just need to talk to someone. Call **310-6789** (do not add an area code) any time of day or night. You can talk to someone right away. Translators can help you in many different languages. Say the name of the language you need in English to get an interpreter

BounceBack® program

BounceBack is for people dealing with low mood, stress, or anxiety. You learn skills in an online course. You can also talk with a trained worker called a “coach” on the phone. The program is free. Telephone coaches speak English, French, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Punjabi. Bounce Back is run by the Canadian Mental Health Association. Visit **www.bouncebackbc.ca** for information on the BounceBack program.

This booklet was written by the Canadian Mental Health Association’s BC Division. It is based on current research and resources. We also check key facts with doctors and other mental health experts. Please contact us if you want to know what resources we used.

Founded in 1918, CMHA is a national charity that helps maintain and improve mental health for all Canadians.

bc.cmha.ca



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Health Association
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Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Colombie-Britannique
La santé mentale pour tous



heretohelp
Mental health and substance use
information you can trust