

What is Depression?

Depression is a common mental health concern. About eight percent of adults in Canada will experience an episode of depression in their life time. Depression is not just about feeling sad. Those who have a depressive disorder have symptoms that impact the way that they think, feel and act. It can also interfere with their ability to do daily tasks.

Some of the symptoms of depression include:

- Overwhelming feelings of sadness
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Poor sleep or too much sleep
- Poor concentration or memory
- Feeling worthless, helpless or hopeless
- Eating more or less than usual
- Feeling slowed down or agitated
- Feeling unreasonably guilty
- Loss of energy, feeling tired
- Tearfulness
- Having thoughts of death or suicide
- Decreased sex drive
- Avoiding other people

Risk Factors for Depression

The risk factors for depression are not fully understood. It may be related to:

- Relationship problems
- A loss such as a death or loss of a job
- Pregnancy/childbirth

Resources...

Canadian Mental Health Association: Edmonton » <http://edmonton.cmha.ca/>

Public Health Agency of Canada » www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php

Mood Disorders Society of Canada » www.mooddorderscanada.ca/

- Seasonal changes
- Long periods of high stress
- Biological changes in the brain
- A family history of depression

Will I Get Better?

Depression is very treatable. It can be treated by counselling and/or medication. Often a combination of counselling and medication is most effective.

Your family doctor can help you decide the best type of treatment for you or your doctor may refer you

to a mental health practitioner for further assessment and treatment.

Depression sometimes goes away without treatment but it can last for several weeks or months. Treatment through counselling and medication will help the depression end more quickly.

Is There Anything I Can Do To Help Myself?

There are many things that you can do to help yourself. People who have depression often feel very tired, see themselves as worthless, helpless and often see their future as hopeless. These negative thoughts and feelings are symptoms of depression and may or may not be related to what's going on in your life. Things that you can do to help yourself include:

- Work with your doctor. A trusting and honest relationship with your family physician is very important.
- Take your medication as prescribed. Anti-depressant medication can take at least two weeks before you notice any changes. Most side effects will go away after about a week but tell your doctor about any side effects and do not stop your medication without speaking to your doctor.
- Set small attainable goals for yourself to improve motivation and confidence.
- Be patient with yourself. You did not develop depression overnight and it will take some time to get better.
- Let your family and friends help you. Be around people who care about you.
- Take part in activities you enjoy such as going to a movie or reading.
- Eat healthy. Even if you don't feel hungry your body needs energy to heal.
- Regular exercise can reduce symptoms of depression. If you have not been active for a long time, start small, like going for a walk.
- Limit or avoid alcohol and non-prescription drugs. Alcohol and street drugs worsen the symptoms of depression and may also interfere with your prescribed medication.
- Limit drinking too much caffeine. It can make you feel anxious and irritable and make it more difficult to sleep.

If you are having thoughts of suicide, tell your doctor and don't be afraid to use the 24 Hour Distress line, 780-482-HELP (4357), attend the Walk-In Counseling Society 9562-82 Ave., 780-757-0900, or go to the hospital.