



Understanding depression and how to get help

What is depression?

Sadness is a natural part of being human, and feeling this way for a few days can be normal. But if these feelings of sadness last for more than a couple of weeks and start interfering with a person's life in a major way, they may be suffering from depression.

Depression is the experience of feeling sad and "down" for a long period of time, to the point of feeling hopeless, helpless and worthless. Depression can interfere with everything, including sports, school, family and relationships. Getting help early can promote full recovery and let the person get back to being themselves.



REMEMBER! Depression is an illness that affects the brain and hormones. Depression is not a personal weakness. If someone is experiencing depression, it's not their fault. It's very real, and the sooner they get help, the better.

Signs of depression

Depression not only changes the way a person feels, but also how they think and act. It's not just about mood. Those close to someone with depression may notice something is wrong. In fact, sometimes friends, teammates and family might sense something's wrong before the person does.

A person experiencing depression might:

- Feel sad or anxious more than usual
- Feel worried, angry or upset a lot
- Have trouble coping with everyday activities, even minor ones
- Lose interest in things they enjoy doing
- Feel hopeless, worthless or guilty
- Have trouble sleeping or sleep more than usual
- Cry a lot
- Have low energy, or feel restless
- Want to eat more or less than usual
- Have trouble paying attention, concentrating or making decisions
- Think a lot about suicide, or death in general

Helping a friend, teammate or family member

You can play a key role in helping a person who is depressed:

- Be a good listener and avoid making any judgments
 - Encourage your friend or family member to get other help as well, and assist them in finding it
 - Offer to go with them to appointments
 - Stay in regular contact and let them know you're there for them
 - Make plans together to do something fun
 - Stay alert for warning signs of suicidal behaviour (see suicide prevention infosheet).
- If there is an immediate risk, get them to a hospital emergency department, or call 911 right away.

Don't forget to look after yourself. Make time for your own wellness needs – physical, emotional, social – and seek extra support for yourself when you need it.

Finding help

Some find the support of family, friends and a family doctor is enough to help them feel themselves again. If not, there are psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurses, social workers and counsellors in the community that can help. They can be found in a range of health care settings and a family doctor can refer you to these mental health specialists. If you're not sure where to go for help, you can always contact your CMHA Mental Health Coach connected with your team. Below you will also find some other suggested resources that may be helpful.

» Kids Help Phone

They provide free professional counselling by phone or online, and can connect young people to information and local help. Kids Help Phone is available 24-7 for individuals between the ages of five and 20. Online chat is also available at certain times.

www.kidshelpphone.ca

Call: 1-800-668-6868

Text: 686868

» 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline

9-8-8 provides nationwide, 24-hour, bilingual support to anyone who is facing suicide.

www.988.ca

Call/text: 9-8-8

These supports will stay confidential unless there's an immediate risk of harm. If seeking support by yourself is daunting, asking a trusted friend to be there when you're calling a helpline or scheduling an appointment can help. It can also be hard if you're struggling with stigma, have a fear of being stigmatized, or you aren't used to seeking mental health support. Educating yourself on mental health, showing yourself compassion, talking to people who are open about their own mental health and advocating for yourself are some steps to reduce stigma.