

# Depression

## What is Depression?

It is normal to feel slight shifting in your mood from time to time. Having moments of low mood is normal.

Some people describe moments of sadness or unhappiness as “feeling blue” or feeling depressed. It is problematic when these periods last for a longer time and are experienced on a regular basis.

Major or clinical depression is a mood disorder where low mood (sadness, unhappiness) lasts a long time and affects your everyday life.

Most of the time, people with major depression need professional help to get better. Some people can start feeling better within weeks of starting treatment.

Depression can be a symptom of your movement disorder. You may experience a chronic low mood with the onset of a movement disorder, or at any point throughout your life.

Depression is common, it can happen at any age, to anyone.

### Depression:

- is not a sign that you are weak
- is not something that is easy to stop on your own
- can be treated at any age

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## What causes it?

There are many reasons why you might become depressed. Usually it takes more than one of the following reasons to experience depression:

### Biological causes

- Changes in the levels of certain brain chemicals are often seen in people who are depressed.
- A family history of depression - if members of your family have been depressed, you may have a higher chance of becoming depressed.

### Life events

Certain life events can lead to depression in some people.

These events may include:

- loss of a loved one
- financial problems
- relationship problems
- abuse or trauma
- other stressful life events
- a stressful work environment
- diagnosis of a chronic illness

### Thought patterns

Thinking negative thoughts often, or feeling that you are not good enough (low self-esteem) could increase your chance of becoming depressed.

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## Physical illness

Not feeling well can cause you to become depressed or can increase your chance of becoming depressed. It is important to have your health checked regularly and talk with your health care team about mental health.

## Medications

Some medications can contribute to a depressed mood. If you think that this is happening to you, speak to your health care team.

## What are the signs that I might be depressed?

There are many signs and symptoms of depression. A few of the symptoms are listed below.

Health care professionals can help you find out if you are depressed. They will ask you questions about these symptoms and how they are affecting your life:

- feeling sad, empty, or hopeless
- loss of interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- weight loss or weight gain
- sleeping too little or sleeping too much
- low energy or feeling tired
- feeling worthless and/or guilty
- difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- thoughts about death or suicide

***You should get help if you have been having 5 or more of these symptoms for 2 weeks or longer.***

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## **What treatments can help?**

There are different kinds of treatments for depression. Relaxation techniques, meditation, exercise, and trying pleasurable activities all show strong evidence for decreasing symptoms of depression.

A healthy lifestyle (eating well and exercise) can help.

## **Limit alcohol**

For a short time, alcohol may help you feel more happy and energized. However, over time it can add to and worsen your symptoms of depression. Alcohol can also affect how your prescription medicines work. Talk to your health care team about a safe amount of alcohol for you.

## **Get enough sleep**

When you get enough sleep, you can cope with stress better. Most people need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep to feel their best. This is different for everyone. Going to bed and getting up at the same time each day can help.

**Social supports** and peer groups are important to have and can help you recover.

## **Exercise**

Physical activity is known to help with symptoms of depression for a number of reasons. It increases blood flow, oxygen, neurotransmitters, and endorphins in the brain. Try to do 15 to 20 minutes of physical exercise several days a week. Your health care team can help you incorporate exercise as part of your routine.

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Treatments for depression can be used alone or combined.

They include:

- **Anti-depressants** and other prescribed medicines  
Some medicines can help balance the levels of chemicals in your brain. These medicines can take several weeks before they start to help.
- **Psychotherapy** (talk therapy)  
Psychotherapy is talking to a professional about your depression and what is causing it. They can teach you ways to manage the symptoms that you are experiencing. Ask your health care provider about the different types of psychotherapy that can help manage depression.
- **Neurostimulation**  
Stimulating areas of your brain with an electric current or a magnetic field can help. This might be a treatment to think about when other treatments (such as medicine or therapy) have not worked.  
Neurostimulation treatments include:
  - Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
  - Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)
  - Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS)

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Please talk to your health care professional about your mental health and if you have any questions about the different treatments.

## What are some resources in my community?

The Mood Disorder Association of Ontario (MDAO) can help people across Ontario who have depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder. They offer free support and recovery programs.

[www.mooddisorders.ca](http://www.mooddisorders.ca) or call (416) 486 8046

Wellness Together Canada provides resources and support for mental health and wellness.

<https://ca.portal.gs/about/>

AbilitiCBT <https://myicbt.com/home> is an internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy (iCBT) program, free if you live in Ontario or Manitoba

TeleCBT <https://telecvt.ca/ohip/> OHIP covered one-on-one therapy

If you are having thoughts of harming yourself at any time, please call the **Distress Centre Helpline** 416-408-HELP (4357) or visit your closest emergency department.