

Depression

What is depression?

Depression is a treatable mood disorder. It is different from the usual changes in mood that people have in every day life. People with depression have a major and unusual change in how they think, act, and feel.

What causes depression?

The cause of depression is not known. The risk factors for developing depression include:

- › Your genetics (genes passed down by your family)
- › Your biology
- › Changes in your brain chemistry and nerve cells
- **Other risk factors for depression include:**
 - › Negative (bad) childhood experiences
 - › Not able to access care when it is needed
 - › Not able to access the right level of health care
 - › Not able to access the resources needed to be healthy (food, housing, a job)
 - › Environmental factors (like stress, not enough sleep, and substance use)

What are the symptoms of depression?

- › Feeling sad or low for most of the day
- › Eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
- › Feeling very tired, or having less physical and mental energy
- › Trouble thinking, having fewer thoughts, or thoughts feeling slower
- › Unusual aches and pains
- › Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- › Feeling irritable or angry

- › Feeling worried or anxious
- › Trouble focusing or concentrating
- › Trouble remembering
- › Finding it hard to make decisions
- › Losing interest and pleasure in most activities
- › Feeling guilty or worthless
- › Feeling hopeless or helpless
- › Thoughts of suicide or death
- People who are diagnosed with depression have **at least 5 symptoms** from the list above **that last over a 2-week (14 day) period**. At least 1 of these symptoms is a depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure.
- These symptoms can make everyday life very hard. How long a person has these feelings, and how severe (serious) they feel them, is different for every person.

How is depression treated?

- Finding the right treatment for you depends on:
 - › Your symptoms
 - › Possible side effects
 - › Your medical history
 - › Your family medical history

Medications

- Depression is commonly treated with anti-depressant medication.
- Other medications may be used to treat symptoms related to depression like problems with sleep or anxiety.

Other treatment options

- › Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
- › Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS)
- › Light therapy
- › Psychotherapy:
 - › Cognitive behavioural therapy
 - › Behavioural activation
 - › Interpersonal therapy

Your health care team will talk with you about your treatment options.

How can I manage depression and prevent relapse?

- Learn about your triggers, early warning signs, and symptoms
- Recognize symptoms early to get help right away
- Get help from people you trust, support groups, or mental health services
- Tell your health care team about your symptoms
- Lifestyle factors, like:
 - › Exercise
 - › Regular sleep schedule
 - › Eating healthy
 - › Limiting or avoiding substance use

The goals of relapse prevention are to:

- › Lower how many episodes you have
- › Make your episodes shorter
- › Help you to manage how severe (very bad) your episodes are

Where can I get help?

- Tell your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) about your experience. They can help you learn about your options, start treatment, and connect you to local mental health services.
- Talk to your primary health care provider about local community or online resources like:
 - › Support groups
 - › Education about symptoms, symptom management, and coping skills

In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department.

To get help right away, call the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team:

- › **Phone (toll-free): 1-888-429-8167**

For more information, visit The Mood Disorders Society of Canada's website for resources in English and French:

- › <https://mdsc.ca/>

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