

Depression

What is depression?

Depression is a treatable brain illness that can cause:

- › Feeling sad or low most of the day
- › Having little energy
- › Loss of interest in your usual activities
- › Trouble sleeping or sleeping all the time
- › Eating a lot more or a lot less
- › Poor concentration

These symptoms make everyday life very hard. If not treated, symptoms can last for weeks or months.

In some cases, depression can lead to thoughts of hopelessness, helplessness, and even death or suicide.

What causes depression?

There is no one cause for depression. Many factors play a role. They include changes in brain chemistry, genetics (depression often runs in families), and environment. You may have learned coping strategies that cause negative thoughts, or you may have gone through trauma or stressful events that raise your risk.

How is depression treated?

If you suffer from depression, treatment can help.

- Talk therapy works well for mild depression. Talk therapy helps you to start changing your thought patterns and helps you learn healthy life skills and create routines.

- Education and peer support can help you see triggers for your depression. This can help you take charge if you start to have symptoms again, and stay well.
- When talk therapy alone is not enough, medications are often needed for moderate (medium) or severe (very bad) depression. You may be prescribed medications to treat problems with mood, sleep, and anxiety.
- Sometimes, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) may be needed for faster relief from symptoms. Each person is unique, so treatment options vary from person to person.

Where can I get help?

- The first step is to tell someone like a friend or family member how you are feeling. That way, you are not alone. Your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) can get you started on treatment or refer you to local mental health services.

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

In Nova Scotia, to get help right away, call the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team:

- › Phone (toll-free): 1-888-429-8167

- Depression is an illness, not a weakness. **Treatment can help, so reach out to your primary health care provider right away.**
- For ongoing support, join a self-help group. Find a group that teaches positive coping strategies where you feel welcomed and valued as part of the group.
- **For more information, visit The Mood Disorders Society of Canada's website for resources in English and French:**
 - › www.moordisorderscanada.ca/page/resources

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www.nshealth.ca*

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