

depression

Part of the Plainer Language Series

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depression



What is depression?

Depression is a mental illness. It affects the way you feel. The way you feel is called your mood.

Depression is a very low mood. Depression makes it hard to feel happy or to enjoy things.

What is the difference between depression and sadness?

We all have bad days. It is normal to feel sad when something bad happens. Normal sadness goes away on its own.

Depression is different from a bad day. Depression can start at any time and lasts for a long time. You can't just get over it on your own. Depression is a real health problem.



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If you are thinking about ending your life, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433.

If you think that a loved one is in danger, call 9-1-1.



Signs of depression

Here are common signs of depression:

- Feeling sad or down.
- Feeling hopeless, like things will not get better.
- Feeling empty, like you cannot feel any emotion.
- Feeling irritated.

- Thinking that things will not get better.
- Thinking that nothing makes you happy any more.
- Thinking that problems are your fault
- Thinking that you are not good enough.
- Thinking about dying or ending your life.



- Having a hard time thinking clearly, concentrating or making decisions.
- No longer liking things you used to like.
- Eating much less or eating much more than usual.
- Trouble falling asleep or sleeping more than usual.
- Feeling tired or run down most of the time.
- Feeling restless, like you cannot sit still.
- Having aches and pains that do not seem to be caused by another health problem.



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When does depression affect me?

Depression can happen at any time. But there are times when you may be more likely to develop depression.

Depression can start when you are very upset or under a lot of stress. For example, it can start when you lose a loved one or move to a new city.

Depression can go along with another health problem. The signs of depression can add to health problems, and other health problems can add to depression.

There are also two types of depression that start to affect you at specific times. These types of depression are:

- Depression that starts around the time you or your partner gives birth to a baby. It is called “postpartum depression.”
- Depression that happens at certain times of the year. Many people with this type find that depression affects them in the winter.

It is called “seasonal affective disorder.”

It is important to remember that you cannot give yourself depression. It is not your fault.



What can I do about depression?

If you think that you have depression, talk to your doctor. Your doctor will work to see what is causing these feelings.

If your doctor says that you are depressed, you can start treatment. There are many different kinds of treatments for depression. Your treatment plan will depend on the type of depression you have. It will also depend on your own wishes and your goals.



Talk therapy

Talk therapy is very good for depression. In talk therapy, you talk through problems with a trained counsellor. Your counsellor helps you learn new skills to deal with problems. You work together until you can use the skills on your own.



Your doctor can help you find a counsellor. You can sometimes find one through your work or school. You can also learn skills in books, online or through support groups.

Medication

When you have depression, there are changes in your brain. Different medication may help overcome these changes. Medications called antidepressants are often used to treat depression.

Your family doctor or psychiatrist can prescribe medication for depression.



Tips on medication

- Tell your doctor if you take other medications, vitamins or herbs. Some medications do not work well together.
- Everyone's body is different. You may have to try a few different medications to find the best one for you.
- It takes time for medications to start working. Talk to your doctor about what to expect.
- Follow your doctor's instructions. Ask questions if you do not understand what your doctor says.
- All medications have side effects. Two examples of side effects are a headache or a change in the way you sleep. Talk to your doctor if side effects are a problem.
- Once you start taking medication, do not suddenly stop taking it. Talk to your doctor first.
- Take your medication until your doctor says it is safe to stop, even if you feel well. People usually take medication for some time after they feel better. This can help to stop depression from coming back.

Support groups

Support groups are places to connect with other people. You can meet people who are dealing with the same problem as you. You can also share information and learn from others. There are many different kinds of support groups.

To find support groups in your community:

- Ask your doctor or counsellor.
- Contact the Mood Disorders Association of BC. You can find the contact information at www.mdabc.net.
- Contact your local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. You can find the contact information at www.cmha.bc.ca.

Other treatments

Some herbs and vitamins may also help. Be sure to talk to your doctor about other treatments you want to try. Some treatments do not work well with other treatments.



Self-care

Self-care means that you take care of yourself. You can do these things along with other treatments. Here are some things to try:

- **Try to get enough sleep every night.** Sleep has a big effect on our moods. When we are tired, it is hard to deal with problems or see the good side of things. If you cannot sleep well, talk to your doctor
- **Find ways to relax.** Activities that lower stress can also help you cope with depression. Yoga, tai chi or meditation may help.
- **Try to get some exercise every day.** Exercise helps to lift our mood. Even small changes, like walking to a different bus stop, can make a big difference.
- **Try to eat well.** Food is our fuel, so it makes sense that we feel better when we give ourselves healthy food.
- **Avoid alcohol or other drugs.** They might hide our feelings for a short time, but they make us feel worse in the long run. They can also stop medication from working properly. If you having a hard time cutting back your drinking or drug use, talk to your doctor or counsellor.

Recovery and beyond

Recovery means returning to good mental health. Recovery happens in stages over time. It may take some time to get back into your old routine. Remember that you are dealing with a health problem. It is okay to ask for help. It is okay to take time to care for yourself.

If you have had depression, there is a chance that it might come back. This is called a relapse. When you feel better, it is a good idea to talk to your doctor or counsellor about relapse. You can work together to lower the risk of relapse. If you do start to notice that signs of depression are coming back, you can take action before it becomes a big problem.

Where can I learn more about depression?

Talk to your doctor first if you think you are dealing with depression. Next, you can learn more about depression from these resources:



Your local crisis line

A crisis line can help you when you are very upset. They can help with a lot of other problems, too. They can help you find services in your community. You can also call if you just need to talk to someone. Call 310-6789. Do not put 604, 778 or 250 before the number. You can talk to someone right away.

BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information

Visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca for fact sheets and other useful information. You can learn more about depression and other problems. You can read stories and connect with others who are dealing with depression. There are three small booklets to help you with depression: dealing with a diagnosis of depression (when your doctor says you have depression), working with your doctor, and preventing relapse of depression.

Bounce Back program

Visit www.bouncebackbc.ca for information on the Bounce Back program. Bounce Back is for people dealing with low mood, stress or anxiety. You learn skills from a DVD or you can talk to someone on the phone. The program is free. Talk to your doctor if you want to sign up for Bounce Back. Bounce back is run by the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Mood Disorders Association of BC

The Mood Disorders Association is for people who have depression and other mood problems. They have support groups and other programs to help people. The Mood Disorders Association has groups across BC. To find a group in your community, visit their website at www.mdabc.net or call 604-873-0103.



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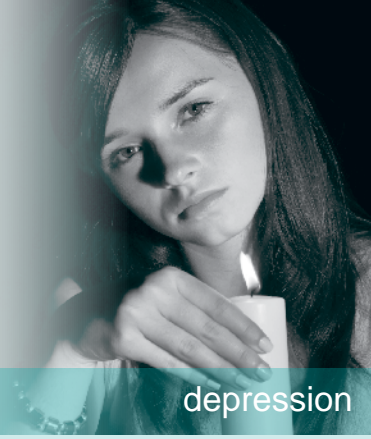


What is grief?

Grief is the normal mix of thoughts, feelings and actions that happens when we lose something.

- We might feel empty, worried, sad or angry. We might even feel relieved at times.
- We might think that things will never get better. We might wonder what we could have done differently.
- We might act out or have a hard time doing much at all.

Grief can have some of the same signs as depression, but grief and depression are not the same. When you have depression, it is hard to go on with your life. When you grieve, you can still go on with your daily life, even though you feel sad and upset.



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Everyone feels grief when they lose something important. But everyone grieves differently. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Why do people feel grief?

We feel grief when we lose something, such as:

- Loving a loved one
- Losing a pet
- Losing your way of life, like losing your job or ending a relationship
- Losing health, like when you are sick or hurt
- Losing something you own that was important to you

We might also grieve when we expect to lose someone or something, like when a loved one is very sick.

How does grief affect mental health?

Grief can affect our mental health. In some cases, grief can have a big impact. The strong feelings around grief can trigger mental health problems or make mental health problems worse. Grief can also make it harder to deal with other stresses in our life.

When should I find extra help?



Grief is natural. It usually gets better over time. But some people need extra help to get them through a difficult time. Here are signs that show you might need extra help:

- You feel hopeless or feel like things can never get better.
- You cannot take care of yourself or others.
- You spend a lot of time thinking about death or suicide (ending your own life).
- You use unhealthy ways to cope with grief, like drinking or using drugs.
- You notice signs of depression or other mental health problems.

If you think you need extra help dealing with grief, talk to your family doctor. Your doctor can help you find the right professional.

Asking for help does not mean you are weak. It means you know that you feel unwell and want to do something about it.

Where can I learn more about grief?

Talk to your doctor if you are having problems with grief. You can also try these resources:



BC Bereavement Helpline

Talk to someone at the BC Bereavement Helpline. Bereavement is another word for grief. You can talk to someone who is trained to help with grief. They can also help you find supports in your community. In the Lower Mainland, call 604-738-9950. In the rest of BC, call 1-877-779-2223. It is a free call.

The BC Bereavement Helpline website has free brochures and other information on grief. You can also find a support group in your area. Visit www.bcbereavementhelpline.com.

Your local crisis line

If you are upset or if you need to talk to someone, call 310-6789. Do not put 604, 778 or 250 before the number. You can talk to someone right away.

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This booklet was written by the Canadian Mental Health Association's BC Division. It is based on current research and resources. We also check key facts with doctors and other mental health experts. Please contact us if you want to know what resources we used.

primer fact sheets 2012



heretohelp

Mental health and substance use
information you can trust

HeretoHelp is a project to the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. The BC Partners are:

- AnxietyBC
- BC Schizophrenia Society
- Canadian Mental Health Association's BC Division
- Centre for Addictions Research of BC
- FORCE Society for Kid's Mental Health
- Family Services of the North Shore, Jessie's Legacy Program
- Mood Disorders Association of BC

We work together to help people manage mental health and substance use problems. We are funded by BC Mental Health and Addiction Services. It is an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.