

DEPRESSION

Learn More

For additional information on **depression** visit the Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Talk to a Doctor

If you are experiencing the symptoms mentioned above, make sure you talk to a doctor. Sometimes the symptoms of depression make it hard to take steps to seek help. For men, it is also normal to feel uncomfortable approaching a doctor about depression – seeking help for emotional issues might seem unmanly or weak. However, the sooner depression is diagnosed, the more successfully it can be treated. It's best to talk to a doctor without delay and describe your symptoms as clearly as you can.

Get Treatment

A doctor may recommend one or more of these types of treatments.

- **Anti-depressant drugs** – These drugs are effective for about two thirds of people who have moderate to severe depression. They are not addictive and their effects are not usually felt for two or three weeks. Patients have to commit to taking them. It may take up to six weeks before the benefits kick in.
- **Psychological therapy** – This type of therapy can take many forms, ranging from single sessions talking to a doctor to long-term courses of counselling with a psychotherapist. The goal of some types of psychological therapy is to un-learn the negative thinking patterns that lie at the heart of depression.
- **Diet and exercise** – Diet and exercise can have surprisingly positive effects on your mental health. For example, having sufficient levels of vitamin B and folic acid in your diet can be helpful. It is also well-known that exercise improves self-esteem and reduces stress levels.



Canadian Men's Health Foundation

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DEPRESSION: WHAT IS IT?

Know the Facts

Depression is a mental illness that can affect men of any age. It is very common. When people have depression, it is much more than a temporary bad mood or even a “blue” feeling that lasts a few days. Rather, depression is a long-term condition that can dramatically affect a person’s daily life.

There is evidence that depression is mainly a biological problem, originating from defective brain chemistry. However, there is no doubt that a number of other factors like personality, family history and life events can also contribute strongly to depression. In the extreme, people with depression can have thoughts of suicide or even attempt it.

Talk to someone you trust - a family member, friend, religious counsellor.



WHO IS AT RISK?

Know the Risk Factors

Up to 20% of the population can suffer from depression at some point in their lives. It is a complex disorder with a number of risk factors, including:

- **Genetics** – Depression runs in families. People with a parent or sibling who have depression are much more likely to develop the condition themselves, compared to the general population.
- **Childhood factors** – There may be no cause-and-effect link between having a disadvantaged childhood and having depression later in life. However, a feeling of helplessness learned in childhood (perhaps because of poor parenting) could contribute to negative thinking during adulthood.
- **Stress** – Depressed people often have higher-than-normal amounts of stress in their lives. Divorces and separations are among the stressful events that can contribute to depression.
- **Physical illness** – It is estimated that around 5% of clinical depression is caused by physical illness. Heart disease, diabetes and cancer can all cause depression, as well as AIDS and neurological disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease and multiple sclerosis.

WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH FOR?

Be Aware

Depression can strike out of the blue. It is a chronic disease, meaning that once you have had one attack of depression, the chances of having another one are increased. For this reason, it is important to seek help as soon as you can if you experience depression for the first time.

Ask yourself these questions

Check out this questionnaire from the Canadian Mental Health Association:

- Are you tired a lot?
- Are decisions more difficult to make lately?
- Do you cry more than you used to?
- Do you feel edgy and tense?
- Have your sleep patterns changed?
- Do you keep to yourself a lot?
- Are you unable to enjoy things the way you used to?
- Do you have to push yourself to do even the simplest of things?
- Have you lost interest in sex?
- Do you eat more/less than you used to?

If you answer “yes” to a few or more of these questions and you have felt that way for a substantial period of time, you may have depression. Talk to someone you trust - a family member, friend, religious counsellor. If symptoms persist be sure to talk to a doctor.

DID YOU KNOW:

Once men hit midlife, they may face an increased risk of depression due to the decrease of testosterone.

