

# Depression



School  
Mental Health  
Ontario

Santé mentale  
en milieu scolaire  
Ontario



Well-being  
St. Clair Catholic District School Board



## Facts

### What is depression?

Depression is an illness that negatively affects your brain and body. You may feel tired all the time. You may not want to go outside. It might be difficult to do normal daily activities. Your health care provider will ask you how long you have had symptoms and how the symptoms have affected your life and your relationships. Early detection and treatment can reduce the burden of the condition. Half of depressive episodes are generally short and resolve within three months.

- Depression does not discriminate; men and women, different ethnicities, rich and poor, are all susceptible.

### Signs and Symptoms of depression in Children

- Irritability, anger, or hostility
- Physical/somatic
- Difficulty concentrating
- Short term memory impairment
- Facial expressions or body language indicating sadness
- Inattention
- Difficulty with planning, organizing and executing tasks
- Forgetfulness
- Hypersensitivity
- Separation anxiety from parent/caregiver

### Signs and Symptoms of depression in Teens

- Irritability, anger, or hostility
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Sadness or hopelessness
- Tearfulness or frequent crying
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Loss of interest in activities
- Poor school performance
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Restlessness and agitation
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Feelings of worthlessness and guilt
- Lack of enthusiasm and motivation
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating

### What are the signs and symptoms of depression in children and teens?

Unlike adults, who have the ability to seek assistance on their own, children and teenagers rely on parents, teachers, or other caregivers to recognize their suffering and get them the help they need. If you have a child or adolescent in your life, it is important to learn what depression looks like and what to do if you spot the warning signs. While it might seem that recognizing depression is easy, the signs are not always obvious. For one, children and teens with depression do not necessarily appear sad. Irritability, anger, and agitation may be the most prominent symptoms.

In order to diagnose depression, at least five of these symptoms should be experienced daily for at least two weeks, and must cause significant difficulty in social and/or work functioning such as missing a friend's birthday or an important work meeting. Depression does not affect everyone the same way, so symptoms may vary from person to person. Your health care provider might use other terms to describe your diagnosis. Depression does not affect everyone the same way, so the disability from depression differs from person to person.

- About 10% of Canadians who are 15 years or older have experienced depression at some time in their lives. Women are more likely than men to be diagnosed with depression; young people are more likely than older people to have depression.

There is no simple answer to what causes depression, because several factors may play a part in the onset of the disorder. These include a genetic or family history of depression, psychological or emotional vulnerability to depression, biological factors, and life event or environmental stressors.

## Tips

### Helping your child/teen

- Help them build positive coping strategies (physical activity, listening to music, reading a book, etc.)
- Listen to your child and don't say "shape up or snap out of it"
- Identify and focus on your child's strengths not on what they do wrong
- Provide positive feedback and compliments
- Set realistic expectations in partnership with your child
- Promote optimism

### Living with Depression

Do not be afraid to ask for help. Work with your health care provider to develop a plan to help you manage your depression. Many people with depression find different ways of managing; the following tips may be helpful:

- Talk to your family and friends
- Make healthy lifestyle choices: exercise, eat healthy foods, get enough sleep
- If you need more time with your health care provider, ask for a longer appointment time
- Use a daily pill box if you take medication

## Resources

- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/understanding-depression.html>
- [https://drive.google.com/file/d/15qRGdaaERFJd\\_1FtdaKl8uStMcqk3JHe/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/15qRGdaaERFJd_1FtdaKl8uStMcqk3JHe/view)
- <https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/guides-and-publications/depression-guide-en.pdf>
- <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/ty4640>

## Sources

- School Mental Health Assist
- Mental Health Commission of Canada
- Ministry of Health
- Mood Disorders Association of Ontario