



CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE
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Fact Sheet

DEPRESSION

Although this Fact Sheet was created with input from consumers of mental health services, psychologists and psychiatrists, the information is of a general nature. More comprehensive information can be obtained from libraries, including Ontario Division, and your local CMHA branch.

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is an illness affecting mind and body. At times, almost everyone feels “down,” “blue” or “sad” and becomes discouraged with life, but usually these mood changes are temporary. However, when a depressed mood persists for one or two months, causes a person to feel miserable and sad in many ways and begins to interfere with everyday living, it is likely to be the sign of a serious state of depression that requires outside help.

WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

Depression is a common problem and can strike at any age. There is no single cause of depression. Sometimes, stressful and discouraging situations overwhelm us on a continual basis and have the potential to become dangerous. The onset of depression may sometimes be attributed to some of the following factors:

- Death or illness of someone close
- Difficulties with job, or personal relationships
- Financial difficulties
- “Unexpressed” emotional burdens
- Loneliness
- Poor self esteem
- A genetic predisposition

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED?

1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men can expect to develop depression at some point in their lives. It is unfortunate that many people never seek help. 80% of people with depression can feel better and recover in a few weeks when they receive appropriate treatment. Most people who suffer from clinical depression feel a sense of relief when they learn the facts about this illness. They realize that depression is not a personal weakness and they are not alone.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Signs to look for:

- Feelings of despair and hopelessness
- Continued fatigue or loss of energy
- Persistent or recurring headaches
- Ongoing disturbances in sleeping habits
- Becoming withdrawn, lacking enthusiasm or lacking feelings of enjoyment
- Sadness and crying for no apparent reason
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Thoughts of suicide

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS?

Knowledge is key for a person seeking treatment. People need to know that depression is one of the most common and most treatable forms of mental illness and 80% of people with depression can be treated successfully.

Treatment must be flexible. Each case of depression is different so people may require different methods of treatment. Your family physician may treat you, although people with serious depression may be referred to a specialist.

Listening and understanding can bring tremendous comfort to someone with depression. Encouraging the individual to put his or her feelings into words can be very therapeutic. It is important to know that depression is an illness. No individual or family member should feel responsible for depression, although there may be things you can do to help your self or your loved one recover.

WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP?

Remember you are not alone! You'll be taking a major step toward recovery when you accept that you may need help. Local support groups can be very valuable. You may want to contact your family physician or local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association for information and referrals.