

Depression in Older Adults You Are Not Alone!

LEARN MORE + TAKE ACTION



Feeling sad or lonely
is not a part of aging



Being a senior can be a time of great joy, and great losses. These years do not have to include mood swings, low energy, and poor focus. Having those challenges does not mean you are weak. **They might be due to a serious medical issue – depression.**

Depression is more than just having a bad day or feeling down. If you feel sad, hopeless or bored with things you normally enjoy, for weeks or months... you may be experiencing depression.

There is hope!

Along with medical help, there are many ways to feel better. Small lifestyle changes can greatly improve your well-being. Call a friend. Be around other people. Listen to music. Join an activity. Go for a walk. Feel the sun on your face. You deserve to be well and enjoy your senior years!

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression can affect your feelings, body and relationships. Being depressed can make it hard to picture ever feeling good again.

It often does not get better on its own. It may even last for years without treatment. If you have any of these symptoms for more than two weeks, seek help.



Check off the symptoms that you have. Then show this checklist to your health care provider.

- Feeling sad, lonely or anxious
- Feeling guilty or having regrets
- Loss of pleasure from your favourite things
- Sleeping problems (too much or not enough)
- Problems thinking and focusing
- Less energy / feeling tired or slow
- Feeling unwell / more aches and pains / irritated
- Changes in eating habits or weight
- Thinking about suicide or death*

* If you (or someone you know) are thinking of hurting yourself or ending your life, call 911 now, or go to the hospital emergency room.

Think you might have depression?

Get help from a health expert!

It is important. No family doctor? There are other options: visit a walk-in clinic, hospital, pharmacist or local health centre.



HOW IS DEPRESSION DIAGNOSED?

To know if you have depression, your doctor will likely:

- Discuss your thoughts and feelings to understand what is happening in your life.
- Do a physical exam and run tests to rule out other issues.

Family members often notice changes in the mood or behaviour of loved ones. Consider bringing someone with you for support.

Make the most of your doctor visit

Depression is an illness like any other. Tell your doctor how you feel. Talking with a medical expert is a major step to getting help and feeling better.

TIPS:

- Go with a family member or friend.
- Bring your checklist and any health notes.
- Explain your symptoms that seem like depression.
- Ask for more information about depression.
- Ask for names of counselors and therapists in your community.
- Book a follow-up visit for soon after.

Before your visit, think about:

When did these feelings start?

Have they gotten worse?

Are there times when things are better?

HOW IS DEPRESSION TREATED?

There are many ways to treat depression. Using a few different treatments gives better results. Your health care provider can explain the pros and cons, to help pick your best options.

1. Health and social supports

Even small changes can boost your mood. Learn more about depression, join support groups or activities in your community, exercise, and eat well.

2. Counselling and therapy

Many people find it helpful to talk about their feelings. Counselling can help you understand your thoughts and emotions. Experts can also help you find ways to feel better.

3. Medication

If needed, your doctor will prescribe medicine (antidepressants) to treat your depression. Many options are available. Knowing how severe your depression is and what other medication you take will help your doctor choose the right one for you.

Facts about antidepressants:

- They work best when taken daily, as prescribed.
- They are not addictive.
- It may take 4–6 weeks to start feeling better.
- Some side effects may occur, most can be managed and resolved.
- Even if you are feeling better, or side effects continue, talk with your doctor or pharmacist before stopping or changing the amount of medicine you are taking. Those experts can help to avoid the return of your signs of depression and to reduce side effects.

Organization contacts

Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH)

www.ccsmh.ca

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP)

www.suicideprevention.ca

Canadian Caregiver Coalition (CCC)

www.ccc-ccan.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

www.cmha.ca

Important health phone numbers

Use this area to record numbers of organizations and services that can help you.

Emergency: 9-1-1

Doctor

Counsellor / Therapist

Pharmacist

Distress / Crisis Line

Local branch of Canadian Mental Health Association

Spiritual Leader or other community supports

This brochure is adapted from the *CCSMH National Guidelines for Seniors' Mental Health: The Assessment and Treatment of Depression*.

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Disclaimer: This brochure is intended for information purposes only. It is not intended to be interpreted or used as a standard of medical practice.



Canadian Coalition for
Seniors' Mental Health

Coalition Canadienne pour la Santé
Mentale des Personnes Âgées