

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is not simply a temporary change in mood or a sign of weakness. It is a **real medical condition** with many **emotional, physical, behavioural** and **cognitive** symptoms.

Many people are ashamed or afraid to ask for help. Others shrug off their symptoms and end up suffering in silence. Contrary to some misconceptions, depression is neither inevitable nor is it a character flaw. People with depression often get these ideas because of the feeling of guilt caused by the illness.

Depression is a real health problem for which help is available.

Educate yourself about depression and know how to ask for help.

Who Does Depression Hurt?

About 1 in 10 Canadians will experience an episode of major depressive disorder (the diagnosis given to those suffering from depression) during their lifetime.

Depression is, in fact, a widespread medical condition:

- Depression is among the leading causes of disability worldwide
- Women are more likely than men to experience depression
- People with a family history of depression may be more likely to develop the disease
- People with chronic illnesses may also be susceptible to the disease

Unfortunately, many people, unaware of how common this illness is, do not seek treatment because they are afraid of what others will think. And yet, today **depression is a common illness for which there are many effective treatments**. If you suspect that you are depressed, it is important that you see your doctor as soon as possible.



What are the Different Types of Depression?

Major Depressive Disorder

The most common form is known as major depressive disorder.

Major depressive disorder is characterized by a fairly lengthy period of time (at least two weeks) during which a person feels sad or hopeless or lacks focus in life, on a daily or almost daily basis, for the most part of each day. This condition is associated with many other symptoms which can have repercussions emotionally, socially, professionally and in other significant areas of life.

Fortunately, if properly managed, recovery is possible for patients suffering from major depressive disorder.

“Seasonal Depression”

There is a type of depression that occurs in association with a loss of daylight, as happens during the winter in Canada. This “seasonal depression” is also referred to as seasonal affective disorder or SAD, and affects between 3% and 5% of Canadian adults. For those that suffer from this form of depression, the symptoms usually come on in the fall and lift with the arrival of spring.

Postpartum Depression

Following the birth of a child, a woman’s hormone levels dip quite profoundly. This may result in the new mother feeling depressed. This is known as a postpartum depressive episode. It is believed that postpartum depression may be linked to rapidly shifting hormones.

Bereavement

Although it is often a painful process, grieving is a normal and necessary response to a loss. Depending on the individual, this period can last weeks, months or even years. A significant loss can trigger genuine depression. However, grief does not normally lead to depression.

What Factors May be Related to Depression?

Depression may be caused by one factor alone or a combination of factors.

Some factors believed to contribute to depression include:

- Family history – depression can be something that runs in families.
- An imbalance of chemicals in the brain.
- Difficult life events.
- Traumatic events in childhood such as the following can influence a person’s mental outlook throughout their life:
 - abuse
 - neglect
 - divorce
 - family violence
- Gender – women are more likely to develop depression than men.
- Increased work demands – during such times people have a greater likelihood of becoming depressed.
- Chronic illness seems to put someone at greater risk of becoming depressed.
- Low income, living alone or divorce can bring out symptoms of depression.
- Substance use, such as alcohol use, is often associated with depression.

Source: Depressionhurts.ca

If you want more information or are concerned about yourself or a friend, please come by the Sakala Success Centre for more information and support.