



## Beyond the blues: depression

While most everyone sometimes gets the blues, this shouldn't be confused with the debilitating disease known as depression.

Depression is more than just sadness. People with depression may experience a lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities, significant weight loss or gain, insomnia or excessive sleeping, lack of energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide.

No one is immune from getting depression. According to Canada's Public Health Agency, depression affects 1 in 10 Canadians in their lifetime, so chances are that it will affect you – if not personally, then someone you know or care about. Depression can last for weeks, months or even years.

Fortunately, depression is highly treatable with more than 80% of patients finding successful treatments. Patients can and do get better – with help. A combination of therapy and antidepressant medication can help ensure recovery.



## Taking charge of depression

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, depression is a whole body illness requiring a whole body treatment. A combination of medicine, counselling, support groups and lifestyle changes is often most effective. No set formula works for everyone: it may take time to find the best combination. A proper and early diagnosis of the type of depression you or someone you care about has will help in taking charge of depression.

## Who is at risk?

While there is no one cause of depression, there are some risk factors that make some people more prone than others to developing the disease.

**True or false:** The following are risk factors for depression (see back page for answers):

- 1) People with a family history of depression, particularly women, are less likely to experience it than men.  
**True / False**
- 2) If a person has a biochemical imbalance in their brain, they may develop depression.  
**True / False**
- 3) If a person has experienced a clinical depression in the past, they are more likely to experience it again.  
**True / False**
- 4) The experience of loss is not believed to be a central component in depression.  
**True / False**

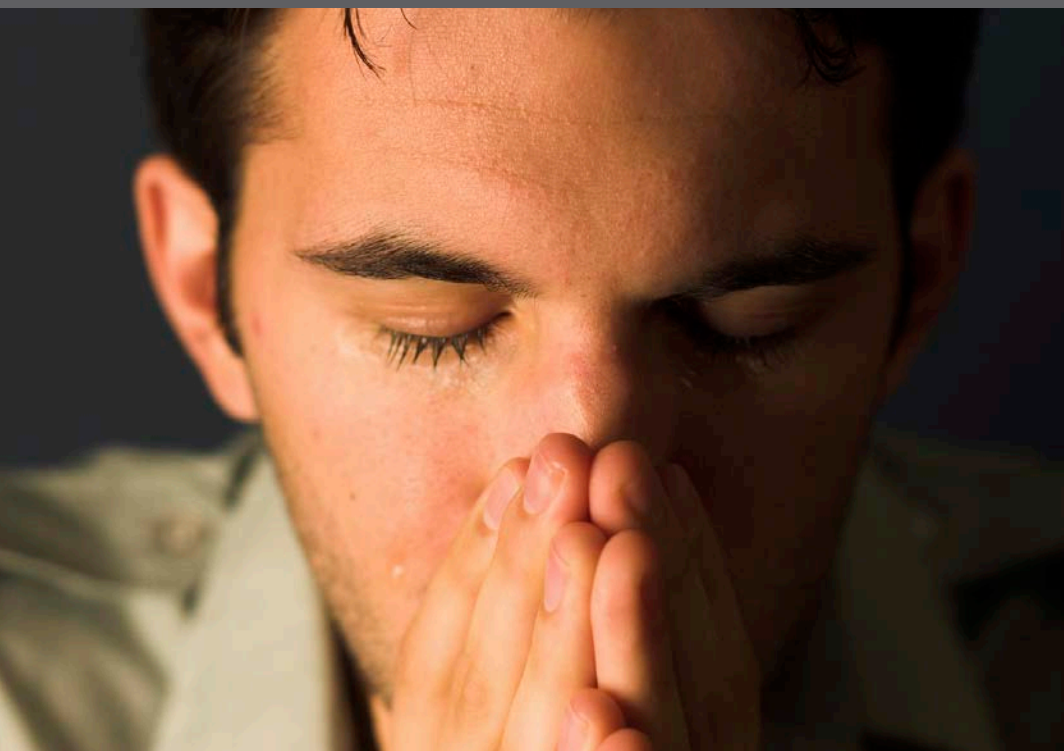
## Treatment is key to recovery

*You can't just snap out of it.*

If you suspect you or someone you care about may be suffering from depression, contact a doctor or local mental health professional or organization for advice as early as possible. Immediate treatment is a key to recovery.

### Where to turn to for help?

- Your family doctor. If you don't have one, contact website directory of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC at [www.cpsbc.ca](http://www.cpsbc.ca)
- Your workplace Employee Assistance Program
- Referrals to counsellors or psychologists: The BC Psychological Association Referral Line at **1-800-730-0522** and the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors Referral Line at **1-800-909-6303** are good resources
- The Mood Disorders Association of BC at [www.mdabc.net](http://www.mdabc.net) can direct you to a depression support group in your area at [info@mdabc.net](mailto:info@mdabc.net)
- The BC Division of the Canadian Mental Health Association at [www.cmha.bc.ca](http://www.cmha.bc.ca)
- A project of the BC Partners for Mental Health & Addiction Services at [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca)
- Crisis lines: Phone numbers are listed in the inside front cover of the phone book



## I can do that!

### *Tips for managing depression*

- Resist the urge to isolate yourself from others. Keep supportive family, friends and health care practitioners a part of your daily life
- Talk to people who have gone through and recovered from depression
- Follow a nutritious diet (see Health Canada's website at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) for Canada's Food Guide)
- Drink lots of water to help with fatigue and replenish brain cells
- Limit your intake of alcohol (which is a depressant) caffeine, sugars and animal fats
- Exercise regularly since exercising produces endorphins (mood enhancers)
- Maintain a regular sleep-wake pattern
- Try a variety of stress management/relaxation techniques such as yoga, deep breathing, massage therapy, acupuncture, aromatherapy, meditation, journal writing etc. to discover what helps
- Chart your daily progress in a mood journal. Track your mood influencers such as medications, sleep cycles, stress management techniques practiced, diet, menstrual cycle, weather, etc. and rate your overall daily mood level out of five. Review your mood journal to identify trends over time
- Understand that depression is not anyone's fault – with help, recovery is possible!

## More than one kind of sad: types of depression

**Major depression** is characterized by constant and severe multiple symptoms and requires a combination of therapies for treatment.

**Manic depression** (also known as Bipolar Disorder) includes cycling between periods extreme high and low mood swings. It can be caused by chemical imbalances in the brain and treated – often successfully – with medication.

**Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** is a type of depressive disorder occurring only during specific times of the year (fall and winter) due to lack of sunlight.

**Post Partum Depression** is a major depressive episode that happens in about one in 10 women after giving birth. It is often related to abrupt changes in hormone levels.

### “Who is at risk” quiz answers:

1. **False** Research has shown that there could be a genetic link to depression. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, women are twice as likely to be diagnosed.
2. **True** While the exact cause of depression is unknown, research suggests that when the two main chemicals in our brains that regulate our emotions are out of balance, we can be left feeling depressed.
3. **True** The reoccurrence rate for depression can be 50% or higher. If you have experienced depression in the past, it is important to look for early warning signs.
4. **False** Along with a significant loss, some other triggers may include traumatic or stressful situations, a chronic illness, side effects from some medications, hormone irregularities, and drug or alcohol misuse.

## Bring your health into FOCUS

Wellness InFocus, produced three times per year, aims to help you focus on wellness by providing strategies for living a healthy and well-balanced life. Each issue provides tips on making positive lifestyle choices, discusses common health concerns, and features resources and self-assessment tools for you and your family.

*Disclaimer: This information is not intended to substitute for the advice of a physician.*