



Am I Experiencing Depression?

Although it's normal to feel sad or upset from time to time, depression is deeper and longer lasting. It can affect how you think, feel and act.

Depression is a common mental disorder that can cause people to experience low mood for an extended period of time. It can affect people of all ages and impact all areas of a person's life, including [school](#), your [relationships](#) and your [physical health](#). Depression has different types and can only be diagnosed by a psychologist, psychiatrist or doctor.

Experiencing depression doesn't mean you're lazy or weak. It's as real and as serious as a physical condition. Taking care of your mental and emotional health is just as important as taking care of your body.

What are the symptoms of depression?

Everyone experiences depression differently, but certain feelings and behaviours are common, including:

- feeling sad, down or low most days
- feeling irritable or [angry](#).
- feeling helpless or [hopeless](#)
- [feeling anxious](#), nervous or restless
- crying a lot
- feeling guilty
- feeling like you're alone
- having negative thoughts or feelings about yourself
- having [trouble sleeping](#), sleeping all of the time or feeling tired all of the time
- having trouble concentrating at school/work
- losing interest in things you enjoy
- having difficulty making decisions
- withdrawing from friends and family
- having changes in appetite (e.g. eating less, eating more, etc.)
- taking more risks than you used to
- acting aggressively or disruptively
- using [drugs or alcohol](#) to cope
- having thoughts about death or [suicide](#)

Only a psychologist, psychiatrist or doctor can make a diagnosis of depression. It's important to talk to a safe adult (e.g. a [doctor/nurse](#), parent/caregiver, counsellor, etc.) if you notice new and ongoing changes in your mood, thoughts and/or actions.

What causes depression?

Many factors can contribute to depression, including [experiencing racism](#) and [other forms of oppression](#), trauma, abuse, physical health issues, [substance use](#) and more. People may experience depression after a major change in their lives, such as:

- the [divorce](#) of parents/caregivers
- a [breakup](#)
- conflicts at home
- the [death of someone](#) close
- a [big move](#)

And sometimes, depression just happens for no clear reason. A combination of physical, psychological and environmental factors play a role in how you feel. Depression can also be genetic, which means that if someone in your family has experienced depression (e.g. a parent), you are more likely to experience it, too.

How is depression treated?

Depression is treatable. It doesn't usually go away by itself, so getting support from a [safe adult](#) is the first step to addressing it. The two main treatments for depression are medication and/or counselling/therapy. Here are some things to know:

- **Antidepressant medication** can lift your mood and help you think more clearly. If a psychiatrist/doctor gives you medication, it's important to take it exactly as prescribed. You can book follow-up appointments with your psychiatrist/doctor to ensure the medication is right for you.
- **Counselling or therapy** is a safe place where you can talk about what's going on for you with a trained professional (e.g. a psychiatrist, psychologist, counsellor, etc.). They can help you understand and deal with the factors that may be contributing to your mood.

In addition to medication and/or counselling/therapy, it's good to know there are some other things you can try to [boost your mood](#), including:

- [exercising regularly](#)
- [going to bed](#) and getting up at the same time every day
- [eating healthy](#) foods
- practising [self-care](#)
- doing [breathing exercises](#)

What are some other things to know about depression?

If you're struggling with depression or low mood, there are people and places here to support you. Here are some other things to remember:

- Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. It's about taking care of your overall well-being.
- Depression is common, and no one has to go through it alone.
- Depression is treatable, even if it takes some time to feel better. It's always OK to ask for help.
- If you're experiencing [thoughts of suicide](#), [self-injury](#) or death, it's essential to talk to a safe adult for help right away.
- You can search for counselling and mental health support services using [Resources Around Me](#).

Depression is more than just feeling sad. If you think you may be experiencing depression, it's important to talk to a safe adult.

Need more information or support? You can contact Kids Help Phone 24/7. www.kidshelpphone.ca

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