

Depression: Information for Parents

Sadness

Sadness is an emotion and a natural part of life. It is a feeling usually connected to a difficult, hurtful, or disappointing experience. Sadness typically lasts a short while and does not significantly impact an individual's daily routine. Sadness may be viewed as a helpful emotion, as it can remind us as to what matters most in our lives.

Depression

Depression is different than sadness.

Depression is a type of mental illness called a mood disorder that can affect a person in how they think, feel and act.

Depression can occur in children, youth and adults. A person with depression may feel down or find they can't enjoy things they used to like. They may feel sad, irritable or a sense of numbness. These changes can last weeks, months or longer if not treated. These changes can cause significant distress for the individual and interfere in their everyday activities. Unlike sadness, there may be no identifiable trigger or event to explain the reason for this change.



<http://www.cmha.ca/>

What to look out for

Recognizing depression in young people can be difficult because young people experience many changes as they grow and develop. Kids and teens may not want to talk about their feelings or may give other reasons to explain their experiences.

Consider whether you see a combination of these changes in your child over a period of time and whether these changes are different from before. Ask yourself whether these changes are causing difficulty in your child in their home, school or social activities.

- **Feelings** of sadness, irritability, anger, worthlessness, or guilt.
- **Physical changes** in their weight, eating habits, sleeping patterns, or aches/pains that can't be explained. They may feel fatigued, sluggish or express a loss of energy. Alternatively, some kids may feel physically agitated.
- **Thinking** patterns that are negative towards themselves or their view of life. They may have a hard time concentrating. In some cases, they may have thoughts of death or suicide.
- **Behaviours** that show a withdrawal or lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities like sports, games, or friends.

Depression should be diagnosed by a trained professional. It is important that health professionals rule out other reasons for the child's concerns, as some of these changes listed above may be a sign of something that is not Depression.

<http://www.cmha.ca/>

Stigma

A person with Depression can't "just snap out of it" or "choose to be happy". This misunderstanding of Depression being "just in your head" can make the person with Depression feel worse.

Treatment

Children, teens, and adults can recover from depression. Early identification and treatment is essential to decrease the length and severity of depressive episodes and prevent new episodes from happening. Treatment interventions depend on each individual and typically it includes a combination of the following options:

- Education & Support (community, school, and family support)
- Psychological treatments/"talk therapy"
- Medication

<http://teenmentalhealth.org/>

What can Parents do?

- **Get informed.** Learn about the signs and symptoms of Depression. Talk to professionals about the types of treatment and supportive strategies to help make an informed decision.
- **Establish and maintain regular contact** with all caregivers and professionals supporting your child. Share your concerns, as your child may not be able or willing to describe what they are experiencing. Ask questions and let your needs be known. You know your child better than anyone else. You are a valuable part of the treatment team.
- **Assist your child to follow their treatment plan.** Due to Depression, your child may be resistant or unmotivated and may need additional support in their care. Ensure your child takes their medication and makes their appointments, even if they feel better. Never stop medication unless their doctor monitors them closely.
- **Be a positive support by identifying and promoting the strengths of your child.** Help by modeling optimism and a positive attitude through your language and actions.
- **Promote a healthy eating, sleeping, and exercise routine at home.** Consider what demands are on your child and reduce any unnecessary stress while they are recovering. Incorporate relaxation and calming strategies into their day. Encourage positive social activities with friends and family.
- **Continue to watch for changes in your child** as 70% of children and youth with Depression will experience it again within five years.
- **Take care of yourself.** Consider your own needs and your own mental health. Reach out for support.

<http://keltymentalhealth.ca/>

References & Resources for Depression:

http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/children-and-depression
<http://keltymentalhealth.ca/mental-health/disorders/depression>
<http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/depression/>

Phone Numbers:

- Call Health Link Alberta: 811
- CYFAMH Intake: 780-342-2701
- Youth Addiction Services Edmonton: 780-422-7383
- Mobile Response Team: 780-427-4491
- Call 211 – Alberta Community resources
- Catholic Social Services: (780) 432-1137
- The Support Network, Edmonton Distress Line: 780-482-HELP (4357)
- Kids Help Phone: 1 800 668 6868