

Symptoms of Depression

Do you have any of the following symptoms...

- Depressed or irritable mood
- Lack of interest in activities and hobbies
- Change in appetite resulting in weight loss or gain
- Sleep problems, especially waking up in the morning
- Low energy or fatigue
- Low self-esteem
- Poor concentration and/or memory difficulties
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Feeling low in the morning, but feeling better as the day goes on.

If you “checked” 1 or more of these items, you might want to talk with your doctor about the possibility of depression.

Resources

Your family doctor can provide treatment and refer to specialists and programs including:

- Community Mental Health Team in your area or The Geriatric Psychiatry Outreach Team, 604-875-4728: Provides assessment and treatment of older adults with mental health concerns.
- Changeways for Older Adults, 604-875-4728: Group cognitive-behavioural therapy for depression.
- Mood Disorders Association of BC, 604-873-0103 or www.mdabc.ca: Self-help and support groups and information on mood disorders.
- Self-Care Depression Patient Guide. This can be downloaded for free at www.mheccu.ubc.ca/publications
- B.C. Psychological Association, 1-800-730-0522: Provides public referral service to registered psychologists in BC

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email pthem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **GT.380.D442**
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Depression & Aging

For older adults and their families

North Shore, Sea to Sky,
Sunshine Coast, Powell River,
Richmond and Vancouver



“I just don’t feel like myself. I’m tired all the time and I don’t have much appetite. I’ve stopped meeting friends for lunch, and I’m becoming increasingly forgetful. What’s wrong with me?!”

Doris Age 70

Everyone feels down from time-to-time. When these feelings start to interfere with your ability to function, you might be experiencing symptoms of depression. Depression affects your mood, your ability to think clearly and your physical well-being.

Antidepressant Medication

1. Your doctor may suggest taking antidepressants to rebalance the neurochemicals in your brain that contribute to depression.
2. Antidepressants should be taken exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
3. Antidepressants take 4-6 weeks (of the right dose) to work.
4. Always tell your doctor about side effects. Adjustments can be made to minimize the side effects and maximize the effect of the drug.
5. Antidepressants improve sleep, appetite, energy, concentration, and mood.
6. You should continue taking your medication for at least 6-12 months **after** you feel better. This will help prevent a relapse.

Depression and Self-Care

Here are some other things you can do to help improve your mood and prevent relapse:

1. **Stay physically active.** Work with your doctor to create an exercise plan. This might include walking or other enjoyable activities.
2. **Nutrition.** Food is the most obvious source of energy. It’s important to eat regular meals, even if you aren’t hungry. If you have a tendency to over-eat, watch your sugar intake and avoid “fad-diets.”
3. **Make time for pleasurable activities.** People who are depressed often drop the activities that they enjoy because they just don’t have the energy! But these activities are important to your mood!
4. **Spend time with supportive people.** Withdrawing from others is a common symptom of depression. Family and friends are especially important when you are feeling low.
5. **Work toward change.** Identify the changes you would like to make in your life. Break these goals down into small, achievable action items. Remember, start with small steps.