



Depression

Depression is more than being sad or feeling grief after a loss. Depression is a medical disorder, just like diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease. Day after day, depression affects your thoughts, feelings, physical health and behaviours. A depressive episode must have a certain level of severity and a minimum duration of two weeks.

Who gets depression?

- At any given time, almost three million Canadians have serious depression
- Depression accounts for 30% of all disability recorded at three of Canada's best known companies.
- 10-15% of men and 15-25% of women

What causes depression?

- Family history and genetics
- Medical illnesses
- Certain medications
- Life events or environmental stresses
- Biological factors
- Psychological vulnerability

Signs and symptoms of depression include but are not limited to:

- Sad mood
- Preoccupation with failures or inadequacies and a loss of self-esteem
- Feelings of uselessness, hopelessness, excessive guilt
- Slowed thinking, forgetfulness, difficulty in concentrating and in making decisions
- Loss of interest in work, hobbies, people
- Social isolation
- Lethargy
- Low energy
- Agitation

- Changes in appetite or weight – eating too little or too much
- Oversleeping or insomnia
- Decreased sexual drive
- Suicidal thoughts

Depression is not a weakness or character flaw. It is a medical illness. Depression is treatable. Between 80-90% of all depressed people respond to treatment and nearly all depressed people who receive treatment see at least some relief from their symptoms.

Recommended reading:

- **The Beast: A Reckoning with Depression**, Thompson, Tracy, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995.
- **In the Jaws of the Black Dogs**, Mays, John Bentley, Penguin Books, 1995.
- **Living Without Depression and Manic Depression**, Copeland, Mary Ellen, New Harbinger Publications Inc., 1994.
- **When Someone you Love is Depressed: How to Help Your Loved One Without Losing Yourself**, Rosen, Laura E., and Amador, Xavier F., Simon & Schuster, 1997.
- **Willow Weep for Me-A Black Woman's Journey Through Depression**, Danquah, Meri Nana-Ama, W.W. Norton & Co., 1998.

Recommended websites:

- Depression is a Treatable Illness: A Patient Guide <<http://mentalhealth.com/bookah/p44-dp.html>>
- Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments www.canmat.org
- Depression Screening – National Mental Health Association www.depression-screening.org
- Psychdirect www.psychdirect.com

The Mood Disorders Association of Ontario provides support, information and education as a complement to traditional and alternative therapies. MDAO services are not intended as a replacement for other treatment options and encourages individuals to seek treatment by a qualified health professional.

Mood Disorders Association of Ontario (MDAO)

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