



The Facts About Teen Depression

Sure, everybody feels sad or blue now and then. But if you're sad most of the time and it's giving you problems with:

- Your relationships with your friends and family
- Your grades or attendance in school
- Alcohol, drugs or sex
- Being able to control your behaviour in other ways

the problem may be DEPRESSION

Depression can be treated

Most people with depression can be helped with treatment, but a majority of depressed people never get the help they need. When depression isn't treated, it can get worse, last longer and prevent you from getting the most out of this important time in your life.

The good news is that you can get treatment and feel better soon. Approximately 4% of adolescents get seriously depressed each year. Clinical depression is a serious illness that can affect anybody, including teenagers. It can affect your thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and overall health.

When you're depressed

- You feel sad or cry a lot and it doesn't go away
- You don't feel like doing a lot of the things you used to like – music, sports, being with friends, going out – and you want to be left alone most of the time
- You feel like you're no good; you've lost confidence, you feel guilty for no reason
- Life seems meaningless or like nothing good is ever going to happen again. You have a negative attitude a lot of the time, or it seems like you have no feelings
- It's hard to make up your mind. You forget lots of things, and it's hard to concentrate
- You get irritated often. Little things make you lose your temper; you over-react
- Your sleep pattern changes; you start sleeping a lot more or you have trouble falling asleep at night. Or you wake up really early most mornings and can't get back to sleep
- Your eating pattern changes, you've lost your appetite or you eat a lot more

- You feel restless and tired most of the time
- You think about death, or feel like you've been dying, or have thoughts about committing suicide

You should talk to a professional if you've had five or more of the above symptoms for more than 2 weeks or if any of the symptoms cause such a big change that you can't keep your usual routine.

Why do people get depressed?

Sometimes people get seriously depressed after something like a divorce in the family, major financial problems, someone you love dying, a messed up homelife, or breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Other times – like with other illnesses – depression just happens. Sometimes teenagers react to the pain of depression by getting into trouble with alcohol, drugs, or sex; trouble with school or bad grades; problems with friends or family. This is another reason why it's important to get treatment for depression before it leads to other trouble.

Let's get serious here

Having depression doesn't mean that a person is weak, or a failure, or isn't really trying... it means they need **treatment**. Most people with depression can be helped with **counselling, medicine or both**.

Counselling means talking with a trained professional about thoughts, feeling, actions, and relationships. You will work together to find where problems exist and learn how to make changes in the relationships, thoughts, or behaviours that contribute to depression.

Medication effectively treats depression that is severe or disabling. Antidepressant medications are not "uppers" and are not addictive. Sometimes, several types may have to be tried before you and your doctor find the one that works best.

Treatment can help most depressed people start to feel better in just a few weeks!

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)

36 Eglinton Avenue West, Suite 602, Toronto, Ontario M4R 1A1 Telephone: 416.486.8046 Toll-free: 1.888.486.8236
Fax: 416.486.8127 E-mail: info@mooddisorders.on.ca Website: www.mooddisorders.on.ca

Talk to someone

If you are concerned about depression, **TALK TO SOMEONE** about it. There are people who can help you get treatment:

- A professional at a mental health centre
- A trusted family member
- Your family doctor
- Your clergy
- A school counsellor or nurse
- A social worker
- A responsible adult

What you need to know about suicide...

Most people who are depressed do not commit suicide. But depression increases the risk for suicide or suicide attempts. It is not true that people who talk about suicide do not attempt it. Suicidal thoughts, remarks, or attempts are **ALWAYS SERIOUS**... if any of these happen to you or a friend, you must tell a responsible adult **IMMEDIATELY**... it's better to be safe than sorry...

Depression and alcohol and other drugs

A lot of depressed people, especially teenagers, also have problems with alcohol or other drugs. (Alcohol is a drug too.) Sometimes the depression comes first and people try drugs as a way to escape it. (In the long run, drugs or alcohol just make things worse!) Other times, the alcohol or other drug use comes first, and depression is caused by:

- The drug itself, or
- Withdrawal from it; or
- The problems that substance abuse causes

And sometimes you can't tell which came first... the important point is that when you have both of these problems, the sooner you get treatment, the better. Either problem can make the other worse and lead to bigger trouble, like addiction or flunking school. You need to be honest about both problems – first with yourself and then with someone who can help you get into treatment... it's the only way to really get better and stay better.

Depression is a real medical illness and it's treatable.

