

Statistics, Symptoms and Facts

What is Depression?

What is Major or Clinical Depression?

- Depression is much worse than simple unhappiness. Clinical depression is a “mood disorder.” This means that a person’s emotional state is abnormally low or sad, and the person cannot independently raise his or her mood.
- The chief symptom of major depression is a sad, despairing mood that persists beyond two weeks and impairs a person’s performance at work, at school or in social relationships.
- This profoundly low mood state can be confusing because some of the symptoms of depression are behavioural, such as moving or talking slowly, while others are emotional and cognitive, such as feeling hopeless and thinking negative thoughts. This is very different from the physical symptoms of other illnesses, like the pain of a broken leg or the fever from a serious infection.

How is Depression Diagnosed?

In making a diagnosis, a doctor will ask the patient if they have had any of the following symptoms. This list is not exhaustive, as there are more symptoms that someone with depression may demonstrate.

- • sleep problems, either sleeping too much or too little
- • loss of interest in work, hobbies, people; loss of feeling for family members and friends
- • feelings of uselessness, hopelessness, excessive guilt
- • preoccupation with failure(s) or inadequacies and a loss of self-esteem; certain thoughts that are obsessional and difficult to “turn off”

Fact Sheet

Mental health ...

... is a part of your overall health. It's about:

how you feel, think, and behave;

how you cope with the ups and downs of everyday life;

how you feel about yourself and your life;

how you see yourself and your future;

how stress affects you;

how you deal with negative things that happen in your life;

your self-esteem or confidence.

We all experience mental health problems from time to time: Feelings like sadness, worry, anger, fear and grief are understandable reactions to negative events in our lives, and don't typically last very long. But if these feelings continue for long periods of time, become overwhelming, and 'get in the way' of daily life, then something more serious than a mental health problem may be happening.

There is combination of factors that are believed to cause mental health disorders, including:

- biological factors – e.g., genetic influences, chemical imbalances, exposure to environmental toxins
- negative early life experiences – e.g., abuse, neglect, death of a relative or other losses and trauma
- individual factors – e.g., self-esteem or way of thinking
- current social circumstances – e.g., school, work, financial, relationship or family stress, or negative life events

Fact Sheet

10 Statistics on Mental Health and Depression

- 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime. The remaining 4 will have a friend, family member or colleague who will.
- 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood or adolescence.
- According to Health Canada and Statistics Canada, approximately 8% of adult Canadians will experience a major depression or anxiety at some point in their lives.
- Almost twice as many women as men - about 10 to 25 % of women - are diagnosed with major depression. This may indicate that men are less comfortable seeking help or do not get an accurate diagnosis, since depression in men often manifests itself as a substance use problem.
- A nationwide survey of Canadian youth by Statistics Canada found that 6.5%—more than a quarter million youth and young adults between 15 and 24—met the criteria for major depression in 2007.
- Just 50% of Canadians would tell friends or coworkers that they have a family member with a mental illness, compared to 72% who would discuss diagnoses of cancer or 68% diabetes in the family.
- According to the World Health Organization, depression will be the single biggest medical burden on health by 2020.

Fact Sheet

- Depression/anxiety continues to be Canada's fastest-rising diagnosis. From 1994 to 2004, visits for depression/anxiety made to office-based doctors almost doubled. In 2003, that meant 11.6 million visits to doctors across Canada about depression/anxiety.
- 54% of people believe depression is a personal weakness.
- It is estimated by NIMH (National Institute for Mental Health) that approx. 2/3 of people who are clinically depressed never receive appropriate treatment - sometimes the depression is misdiagnosed, but a major problem is also that the depressed individual fears being stigmatized, as 'weak' and 'inadequate' and does not seek treatment.

Hope for People Diagnosed with Depression

- “What I think that the Canadian Mental Health Association has done for me, that no one else could have done, is that they allowed me to shed the stigma I put on myself,” said Ms. Neill
- That's the tragedy of depression - at a time when early treatment, and the support of professionals, family and friends are so critical, the person suffering from a clinical depression can withdraw because of the embarrassment and shame, and then the cycle continues downward. However, if depression is treated early and with appropriate treatments, the prognosis for recovery is excellent.
- Depression is serious and 'scary', but many people who face their depression, and 'do the work of moving through their depression' report that they emerge from the dark tunnel with greater self-awareness, and understanding of the dynamics of their interpersonal relationships. The 'gift of depression' for them is that they have learned to let go of those things which they cannot control, and they have been able to move into greater freedom and joy in their lives.

Compiled from:

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Student/ Teacher Resource

Toronto Public Library: Health and Wellness Blog