

# what you NEED TO KNOW about...

## Depression

### Amanda's story... Part 1

**When I was 15 years old**, my mom had an operation and wasn't able to do the things around the house that she used to. It became my responsibility to clean the house, walk the dogs and make supper. I had a job at the local grocery store where I worked after school until late into the evening. When I got home I'd have so many chores to do, that it became hard to keep up with school, homework and my friends. I felt completely overwhelmed and was literally getting sick from all the stress I was under. I couldn't eat and I couldn't sleep. I felt like my life was unraveling.

I began skipping classes to see my friends and boyfriend, and my grades began dropping. Then I was introduced to drugs. Pretty soon I quit everything: my job, school, chores. My boyfriend broke up with me, my friends stopped wanting to be around me and my dad kicked me out because I wasn't contributing. It was horrible. I felt like a total loser.

I went to stay with my grandparents and started to see a family physician. He told me that it was common at my age to feel like the weight of the world was on my shoulders. He referred me to another doctor, who wasn't so great. I began to feel suicidal. The first person I called was my mom...

### What is depression?

It is normal to feel sad from time to time. But this sadness doesn't stop you from going on with your everyday activities. And it goes away on its own. Depression, on the other hand, is a sadness so severe that it interferes with everyday life.

Youth going through a depression often:

- Feel sad, worried, irritable or angry
- Have trouble enjoying anything
- Feel hopeless and worthless
- Have trouble coping with everyday activities at home, school, or work
- Have problems with sleep, energy, appetite and concentration

With severe depression, youth may even hear voices, or have thoughts of harming themselves or others.

**Depression is more than normal sadness.** A depressed person can't 'just snap out of it'. Studies even show physical changes in people's brain chemistry when they are depressed.



## 5 quick facts about depression

1

You can recover from depression

2

It's really common

3

It can happen to anyone

4

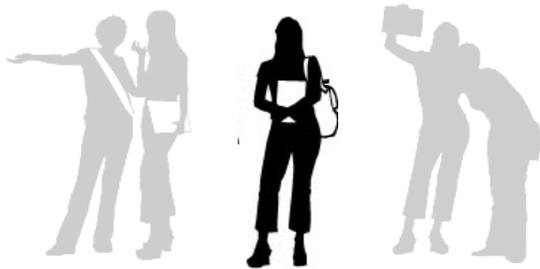
It can change the way you think, feel and act

5

There are lots of effective treatments for it

## How common is depression?

Depression is common. Researchers believe that about 1 in 5 people will go through a depression by the time they turn 18.



Studies also tell us that at any one moment, between 4 and 8 out of every 100 children and youth are having a major depression. Sadly, most people with depression do not get help. **But getting help is important, because there are effective treatments for depression. Early treatment can stop depression from coming back in the future.**

## What causes depression?

Depression is usually caused by a few things going on at the same time:

**Family history:** If your parents or other family members have had depression or other emotional problems, there is a bigger chance that you may have depression.

**Stress:** Upsetting things in your life, like:

- Problems with parents, brothers and sisters
- Your parents are really stressed or depressed
- Your parents are separating or getting divorced
- Being bullied
- Problems with friends or classmates
- Not doing well in school or feeling too much pressure to do well in school
- Someone close to you dies

## What should I do if I think I'm depressed?

If you had a broken arm and were in pain, you'd go to a doctor, right? Instead of causing pain on the outside, depression causes pain on the inside. **But you still need to get help for this pain.** Start by talking to your parents, or an adult you trust. You can also talk to friends for support.

Parents or a trusted adult can help you see a doctor. Let the doctor know how you're feeling. She can check for medical problems that might be causing the depression. The doctor may suggest mental health services, and can help you link with psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers or counsellors.

**If you are thinking about hurting yourself, call:** Youth and Family Crisis Line for Eastern Ontario, 613-260-2360 or toll-free, 1-877-377-7775

## Depression treatments at a glance...

Many different treatments are available for depression. They can be used alone or together, depending on you. Some treatments work well with some youth, but not with others. If a treatment isn't working (after giving it a good try, of course), your mental health professional may talk with you about trying something else.

### “Talk Therapy” or Psychotherapy

There are different types of talk therapy, including:



- **Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT):** Helps change the negative, depressive thoughts and behaviours that contribute to depression, and replaces them with more helpful thoughts and behaviours.
- **Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT):** Helps resolve tension and conflict that can contribute to depression.
- **Solution-focused therapy:** Focuses on your strengths. It helps you to focus on what you would like to change in your future, and what you can do to 'get there'.

### Medications (antidepressants):



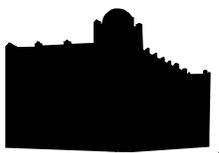
- Are tools that doctors and psychiatrists can use to help ease depression
- Adjust brain chemicals to improve your mood and let you feel a little happier
- Can make it easier for you to take part in talk therapy
- Are not needed by everyone who has depression

**Something to Think About!** If you had asthma, would you think it would be better to 'get over it' without treatment?

**Are antidepressants safe?** Some people are worried about the safety of antidepressants for youth. Research shows that when used in the right way, and monitored by a doctor, antidepressants are safe and effective. Like prescription eye-glasses, medications must be chosen and adjusted for each child or teen.

While some people have strong views about medications for depression - a balanced look at antidepressant treatment is the most helpful. Medications are not all bad, but they are not needed all the time, either.

### Outpatient and Inpatient Services



Children and youth with depression are usually treated in 'outpatient' clinics or community mental health centres. If the depression is severe, you may need more intensive support from a day/evening program or by staying in hospital.

## Healthy living makes a difference

Taking care of the basics can go a long way to helping you feel better. A healthy body supports a healthy mind.

Try to:

- **Get enough sleep.** Poor sleep can cause lower mood and energy levels.
- **Eat healthy.** Do your best to eat lots of fruit and veggies. Some research studies suggest that a lack of Omega 3 fatty acids can make depression worse (see our fact sheet on Omega 3 fatty acids).
- **Exercise.** You need about an hour a day of physical activity, and it's best to exercise outside in the sun. Aerobic exercise (exercise that increases the heart rate and breathing) can have an anti-depressant effect.
- **See the light!** Lack of sunlight (or vitamin D) can trigger depression in some people who are sensitive to 'seasonal depression'.
- **Stay away from street drugs and alcohol.** While street drugs can sometimes make you feel better at first, they can cause more problems and make things worse after a while.



## Getting better: advice from youth who've been there

Youth who have experienced depression wanted to share their experiences to help you! Here are some things that they want you to remember...

- Talking to friends can be really helpful, try to open up to people you trust.
- If you don't have anyone you feel you can talk to right now, try to connect with other youth who would understand-like at YouthNet! [www.youthnet.on.ca](http://www.youthnet.on.ca). Check the 'Support' section on the last page.
- Depression can feel different for everyone. Youth don't all have the same symptoms or react to treatments the same way. What works for some people may not work for others. And that's OK.
- Everyone goes through rough spots, and it's really important to get help if you're struggling.
- Taking a walk, or getting some exercise can make a big difference.
- Expressing yourself through art, music or writing can help you feel better.
- Yoga and meditation are great ways to relax and focus.
- Create a 'chill out space' where you can go to relax and calm yourself. Make it a comfortable place that stimulates your senses: soft pillows, nice smells, music, play dough to keep your hands busy, gum to chew.

## How to help a friend who is going through depression

Depression might make your friend seem 'different'. Your friend might seem really sad, or even angry. Depression can sometimes cause people to be really critical of themselves and others. Try to cut your friend some slack. You can help by...

- Just being there, hanging out and doing everyday things.
- Asking if they are OK, letting them know you care.
- Listening when they want to talk.
- Looking for help from a trusted adult if your friend isn't getting help yet.
- Remembering that you're a friend, not a therapist. Your friend needs the right kind of help for depression, and needs to connect with professionals for that.
- Telling a trusted adult if your friend shares thoughts of suicide. Don't keep this private, even if your friend asks you to. Sometimes you have to 'tell' to be a good friend. If friends have thoughts of suicide, they need to talk to someone right away.



## Amanda's story... Part 2

...I felt so suicidal. The first person I called was my mom...

She brought me to the emergency room and I was admitted to CHEO for a week. Soon my life began turning around. I was back at school. I had a new job, a boyfriend who loved me and friends who cared about me. I stopped using drugs and moved back in with my parents.

Now I know that I have depression. I didn't know that it could happen to a 15 year old girl, like me. **But now I'm so much better** because I know what I have and how to control it without self medicating.

What helped me most was knowing how many resources were out there to help people in my situation. I was soon able to find hobbies which give me the time I need to concentrate on myself. Painting, reading and drawing helps me escape and are important parts of my week, so that I don't get over stressed once again.

### Where to find help in Eastern Ontario

- In a crisis? Child, Youth and Family Crisis Line for Eastern Ontario, 613-260-2360 or toll-free, 1-877-377-7775
- Looking for mental health help? [www.eMentalHealth.ca](http://www.eMentalHealth.ca) is a bilingual directory of mental health services and resources for Ottawa, Eastern Ontario and Canada.
- Renfrew County: Phoenix Centre for Children, Youth and Families, with offices in Renfrew and Pembroke. 613-735-2374 or toll-free 1-800-465-1870, [www.renc.igs.net/~phoenix](http://www.renc.igs.net/~phoenix)
- Leeds and Grenville County: Child and Youth Wellness Centre, with offices in Brockville, Elgin, Gananoque and Prescott. 613-498-4844, [www.cywc.net](http://www.cywc.net)
- Lanark County: Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth, with offices in Carleton Place, Smiths Falls and Perth. 613-283-8260, [www.opendoors.on.ca](http://www.opendoors.on.ca)
- To find a Psychologist anywhere in Ontario: College of Psychologists of Ontario, 1-800-489-8388, [www.cpo.on.ca](http://www.cpo.on.ca)

### Where to find help in Ottawa

- Youth Services Bureau, for ages 12-20, 613-562-3004
- Family Service Centre of Ottawa, 613-725-3601, [www.familyservicesottawa.org](http://www.familyservicesottawa.org)
- Catholic Family Services, 613-233-8418, [www.cfssfc-ottawa.org](http://www.cfssfc-ottawa.org)
- Jewish Family Services, 613-722-2225, [www.jfsottawa.com](http://www.jfsottawa.com)
- The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre (by physician's referral), 613-737-7600 ext. 2496. For more information on our programs, [www.cheo.on.ca](http://www.cheo.on.ca)
- To find a Psychologist in Ottawa: Call the Ottawa Academy of Psychology referral service, 613-235-2529.

## Support

- Youthnet, a mental health promotion program by youth, for youth. Offers art, snowboarding, hiking and yoga programs for youth. [www.youthnet.on.ca](http://www.youthnet.on.ca)



## Want more information?

### Useful websites

- [www.mindyourmind.ca](http://www.mindyourmind.ca)
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.headspace.org.au/](http://www.headspace.org.au/)
- [www.au.reachout.com/](http://www.au.reachout.com/)
- [www.yourlifecounts.org/](http://www.yourlifecounts.org/)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=05yLS4vVhNE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05yLS4vVhNE)

### Books for Children and Youth

- My Kind of Sad: What It's Like to Be Young and Depressed, Kate Scoran, 2006

**Authors:** Thanks to YouthNet's Youth Advisory Committee (YACers in Ottawa!) for their great ideas and advice for youth. Reviewed by the Mental Health Information Committee at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) and by members of the Child and Youth Mental Health Information Network ([www.cymhin.ca](http://www.cymhin.ca)).

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**Disclaimer:** Information in this fact sheet may or may not apply to you. Your health care provider is the best source of information about your health.

Provided by:

### References

Practice parameter for the assessment and treatment of children and adolescents with depressive disorders, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2007. Retrieved Oct 10, 2007 from [http://www.aacap.org/galleries/PracticeParameters/InPress\\_2007\\_DepressiveDisorders.pdf](http://www.aacap.org/galleries/PracticeParameters/InPress_2007_DepressiveDisorders.pdf) .

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