

Depression & Heart Disease

Did You Know Depression Is a Risk Factor for Heart Disease?

It's true. Depression can lead to:

- heart disease
- increased chances of having a heart attack
- a weaker immune system
- a slower recovery from surgery
- increased chances of dying from heart disease
- having trouble following a healthy lifestyle

What Is Depression?

Depression can affect anyone, but people with a heart condition (especially after surgery or a heart attack) are much more likely to become depressed.

You may be depressed if you have many of the symptoms listed below almost everyday for 2 weeks or longer. You will find that these symptoms are getting in the way of your normal activities.

- Having no interest or pleasure in things
- A low mood that lasts longer than usual
- Changes in your appetite
- Changes in your sleeping patterns
- Feeling slowed down, or feeling restless
- Feeling tired or loss of energy
- Feeling anxious, worthless, or guilty
- Having trouble thinking or remembering
- Having trouble making everyday decisions
- Having frequent thoughts about suicide or death

What Causes Depression?

We don't really know. A number of factors can be involved, such as chemical imbalances in the brain, family history, or your heart condition. Sometimes depression can be linked to stressful events, such as the death of a loved one, a divorce, or job loss. Depression is NOT caused by personal weakness, lack of willpower, or a 'bad attitude'.

Whatever the cause, it is important to know that depression can be treated. There is hope for recovery.

How Is Depression Treated?

Studies show that there are a number of effective treatments for depression. The one that is right for you will depend on your personal preferences as well as your condition.

Medicines for Depression

Medicines for depression are called 'antidepressants'. Antidepressants work well for most people and are widely used. It may take some time to find the medicine that works well for you. You may notice some positive effects from the medicine within the first week, but you may not feel the full effects for 6 to 8 weeks.

Some people have mild side effects at the start of treatment, but these sometimes go away with time or with changes to your medicine. Like all medicines, there may be uncommon, but more serious side effects.

Psychotherapy

A form of psychotherapy that is effective for treating depression is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). In CBT, the focus is on learning to manage your negative mood. The therapy involves learning new ways of thinking and behaving in order to promote an improved mood. The therapy can be done in a group or one-on-one setting. A course of therapy typically involves 8-12 weekly sessions. This is an active therapy and often involves practice at home.

Note: Services provided by a psychologist are not covered by basic health care coverage (MSP), but may be covered by some extended benefit plans. This therapy may be available through your local Mental Health clinic.

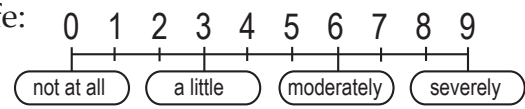
Take an Active Role in Your Treatment

There are many things that you can do to help yourself get through your depression.

- Be an active partner with your doctor
- Communicate honestly and effectively
- Be well-informed about treatment options
- Follow through on the plan that you and your doctor agree on.

When Should I Seek Help?

Ask yourself the following question. Over the last two weeks how much have I been bothered by feeling sad, down or uninterested in life:



If you scored a 4 or more, it would be good to talk to your healthcare provider or a mental health professional about how you feel.

Resources for People with Depression

Self-Management Workbooks

These workbooks can help you manage depression by reactivating your life, challenge negative thinking habits and solving problems effectively.

- Antidepressant Skills Workbook – You can find it for free at www.comh.ca (under ‘Tools and Resources’)
- ‘BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information’ – A Mental Disorders Toolkit and a Depression Toolkit. Free at: www.heretohelp.bc.ca
- ‘Mind Over Mood: Changing how you feel by changing the way you think.’ By Greenberger & Padesky (1995). At your local bookstore (about \$25). An excellent self-help book for depression and anxiety.

Self-Management Groups

- Kely’s Key: a free, confidential, online cognitive behavioral therapy service. www.keltyskey.com
- Chronic Disease Self-Management – A patient education program offered in communities throughout BC. Teaches practical skills in managing chronic health problems. Call toll free: 1-866-902-3767.

General Information and Support

- BC Mental Health Information Line: free information 24/7 about symptoms, causes, treatments support groups and publications. 1-800-661-2121.
- Mental Health Centres: Contact your local health authority (listed in blue pages of phone book), or your family doctor, to find out what services are available in your area.
- The BC NurseLine: Access registered nurses 24/7. Access pharmacists between 5pm and 9am, seven days a week. Call 8-1-1 or, toll free: 1-800-567-8911.

Finding a Therapist

- BC Psychological Association provides a free referral service. 1-800-730-0522
- Mental Health Centres. Call your local health authority (listed in the blue pages of your phone book) or talk to your family doctor to find out what services are available in your area.

Crisis Support

- The Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of British Columbia: 604-872-3311
- www.suicideinfo.ca is a Canadian site and their phone # is 1-833-456-4566
- Anywhere in BC call : 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-784-2433 or <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/>