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## Student Wellness Centre

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[wellness.usask.ca](http://wellness.usask.ca)

**306-966-5768**



UNIVERSITY OF  
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Depression is not just feeling unhappy. It is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness or irritability and loss of interest in almost all activities. Clinical depression can have a profound effect on all aspects of daily living, but most people make a full recovery.

Depression is treatable.

At some point, everyone experiences problems which result in feelings of irritability, sadness, or self-blame. Such responses are usually short-lived.

Clinical depression occurs when these feelings, along with a set of additional symptoms, become intense, persist for several weeks, and interfere with academic, social, family or occupational functioning.

## **Sadness is Different than Depression**

Sadness is a natural response to an emotionally painful experience and resolves over time. It does not usually disrupt your sense of hope for the future, lower your self-esteem, or significantly interfere with work, sleep, appetite, and energy level.

**Suffering from depressed mood can feel overwhelming and confusing. It**

**distorts the way people view themselves, others, and the future.**

## **What Causes Depression?**

While an imbalance of certain brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) is implicated in the development of depression, a biochemical imbalance is unlikely to be the sole cause of depression. There is also evidence of a genetic component to depression. If someone in your immediate family has problems with depression, you may be at an increased risk.

For many people, depression is linked to stressful life events such as interpersonal difficulties (e.g., ongoing conflict in a relationship), losses (e.g., moving away from home for the first time), repeated experiences of failure (e.g., academic problems), and struggles with new responsibilities (e.g., parenting a young child). For others, problems with unemployment, poverty, prejudice, and trauma (e.g., date rape, family violence) may leave them vulnerable to depression.

Chronic medical conditions and substance dependence can also

contribute to the onset or exacerbation of depression.

One of the strongest predictors of depression is past depression. Those who have experienced depression in the past are at higher risk to experience it again.

## **Overcoming Depression**

Depression is treatable. Clinical depression is an illness, but most people make a full recovery. Combined, professional assistance and self-help strategies are particularly effective.

If you have symptoms of depression that are intense, persist, or interfere with your life, please seek professional help.

### **1. Talk to your doctor**

- Speak to a family doctor in order to rule out a medical cause for your symptoms.
- At USask, students can meet with a medical professional at Student Wellness Centre.

If your symptoms are mild to moderate, your doctor may

recommend a number of strategies including counselling and lifestyle changes (e.g., increased physical activity, meditation).

If your depressive symptoms are moderate to severe, your doctor may also recommend the use of antidepressant medication. These medications work well for many individuals.



## **Common Symptoms of Depression**

### **Feelings:**

- Sadness,
- Irritability,
- Hopelessness,
- Pessimism,
- Discouraged, and
- Anxiousness.

### **Thoughts:**

- Worthlessness,
- Negative interpretations,
- Death,
- Suicide,
- Difficulty making decisions, and
- Difficulty concentrating.

### **Behaviors:**

- Brooding,
- Restlessness,
- Poor motivation,
- Social withdrawal,
- Focusing on the negatives,
- Frequent tearfulness,
- Inability to cry,
- Suicidal behavior, and
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities.

### **Physical disturbances:**

- Changes in appetite,
- Disturbed sleep,
- Lack of energy,
- Weight loss or gain,
- Diminished sexual desire,
- Aches and pains, and
- Slowed speech and body movements.

## **2.Seek counselling**

- A mental health professional will work with you to understand and address the factors that contribute to and maintain depression.

- At USask, counselling is available at **Student Wellness Centre**.

### 3. Do what works

**Address depressive thinking** - Difficult life situations can leave people with beliefs about the self, others, and the world that become generalized in ways that interfere with experiencing life in more affirming ways. If your experience has taught you that you are not capable, that others are never helpful, and that life is simply a set of problems, then you may become more vulnerable to depression. Once you learn to identify and challenge negative views of self, others, and the world, then you are in a strengthened position to deal with life stressors.

**Improve your diet** - Our bodies are our physical selves. What we nurture ourselves with physically can enhance our well-being. Eating well-balanced, regular meals is important in managing a depressed mood.

**Exercise** - Exercise has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to reduce depressive symptoms.

**Get enough sleep** - Poor sleep habits (e.g., staying up all night) means people are robbed of the energy they

need to take care of their physical health (e.g., exercise) and engage in coping strategies (e.g., attend therapy sessions).

**Connect with others** - Research shows that having the support of trusted others helps us to cope more effectively with stress and depression.

**SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY if you have thoughts of suicide accompanied by:**

- A fear that you will hurt yourself,
- Securing a means to self-harm (e.g., finding pills or a gun), and/or
- A plan for suicide.

**You can get help from:**

- Asking a trusted friend or family member to take you to the hospital,
- Calling your physician,
- Calling your counsellor, and
- Calling the Crisis Line (306 933-6200) in Saskatoon.

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## Additional Resources

[wellness.usask.ca](https://wellness.usask.ca)

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