

Depression & Anxiety Self-Management



In Alberta, if you need more information or want to talk to someone privately, call:

- Health Link: [811](tel:811)
- Mental Health Help Line: [1-877-303-2642](tel:1-877-303-2642)
- First Nations & Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: [1-855-242-3310](tel:1-855-242-3310)
 - Online chat counselling service: www.hopeforwellness.ca

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To download or order a copy of this resource, go to:
<https://dol.datacm.com/>
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Depression

Being depressed is different than having a depressive disorder. All of us have challenges in life that can leave us feeling sad, hopeless, angry, worried, or on edge. You might feel sad, down, or depressed for a few days or even a bit longer. However, if you find healthy ways to cope with your feelings, they usually go away.



When does depression become a disorder?

- the symptoms get worse—not better
- your feelings stop you from doing things you normally do at work, school, or home
- you feel sad, down, or hopeless most days and it lasts most of the day for more than two weeks

What does depression feel like?

Depression can feel different for everyone. For some people, it's an overwhelming feeling of emptiness they can't explain. Some people feel invisible—or even alone—in the middle of a crowd. Others feel as if all their emotions and energy have been drained, or there's a huge weight pushing down on them. For some people, depression can become unbearable, with feelings of guilt and thoughts of suicide.

Common Symptoms

Physical

- sleeping problems
- tired all the time, sluggish, or inactive
- sick, run down, or no energy
- headaches or muscle pains
- upset stomach
- decreased appetite and weight loss
- increased food cravings and weight gain
- not interested in sex

Feelings

- overwhelmed or hopeless
- irritable, restless, or agitated
- useless or inadequate
- unhappy or sad
- empty or numb
- frustrated
- miserable

Behaviour

- staying away from places, people, family, and friends
- having trouble making decisions or concentrating
- not coping with things that you used to
- loss of interest in activities or hobbies
- not finishing things you start
- using substances to make you feel better

Thoughts

- “People would be better off without me.”
- “Nothing good ever happens to me.”
- “Life’s not worth living.”
- “I’m a failure.”
- “It’s my fault.”
- “I’m worthless.”
- “I wish I were dead.”

If you're thinking about suicide, hurting yourself, or hurting others talk to a healthcare provider right away or call **911**.

Anxiety

It's common to feel anxious in some situations (e.g., preparing for an interview, worrying about the future). Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease that happens when you're unsure about what's going to happen. It can help you stay focused and alert when you feel under pressure, threatened, or need to make big decisions.

When you feel anxious, you might notice changes in your mind and body (e.g., racing thoughts, heart pounding). These changes are only temporary. After a short time, or when the situation has passed, the feelings of anxiety usually stop.



Anxiety affects people differently and symptoms can develop slowly over time.

When does anxiety become a disorder?

- the symptoms don't go away once the situation is over
- it starts to affect your everyday life
- it lasts weeks or months

What does an anxiety disorder feel like?

When symptoms of an anxiety disorder first start, they can feel strange and confusing because they're often physical sensations that are uncomfortable and upsetting (e.g., sore muscles, being easily tired, can't sit still).

Some people with anxiety can have intense anxiety attacks that come without warning, while others feel panicked at the thought of being in a crowd. Some people fear certain things (e.g., taking the bus, being outside), or have terrible thoughts that don't stop. Others may also experience feelings of excessive and uncontrollable worry about daily life events and activities that might happen in the future.

Common Symptoms

Physical

- painful or tight chest, feeling like your heart is pounding
- sweating, shaking, or dizziness
- upset stomach or nausea
- tense muscles or body aches

Feelings

- feeling woozy or detached from what's real
- things don't seem real or they feel strange
- tense, stressed, uptight, or feeling on edge
- panicky, unsettled, or irritable
- impending doom

Behaviour

- using substances to make you feel better
- avoiding certain people, situations, or tasks
- starting things and not finishing them
- pacing, fidgeting, or restless
- trouble sleeping

Thoughts

- can't concentrate, focus, or feel scattered
- thinking about the worst outcomes
- racing thoughts
- easily distracted
- memory problems

It's possible to have depression and anxiety at the same time.

Even though they aren't the same thing, the treatment options and strategies to manage the symptoms are very similar.

How to manage depression and anxiety.

Talk to your healthcare provider or mental health professional about treatment options (e.g., medication, counselling, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy).

Information can be overwhelming when you're not well. Treatment options should be easy to understand. If something isn't clear, ask questions.

In addition to the treatment options that our healthcare provider recommends, there are things you can do to help you manage your symptoms including:

- getting help from others (social support)
- finding ways to relax or be creative
- using thinking strategies
- getting enough sleep
- limiting substance use
- being physically active
- eating well

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a short-term, goal focused therapy that helps you develop skills and strategies for coping well with challenges.

If you're prescribed medication, it can take at least 3 weeks before you start feeling better. Your symptoms may feel worse when you start. It's important to take all prescribed medication as directed by your healthcare provider. Stopping a medication can make your symptoms worse and may cause additional health complications.



If you're not seeing any changes in your symptoms after 3 weeks, if you're feeling worse, or having side effects, talk to your healthcare provider.



Online support and information.

Online resources (e.g., vlogs, blogs, YouTube) can help you learn about other people's experiences and opinions. Unfortunately, they may also provide you with incorrect or unsafe information.

When looking for information, be safe. Look for sites from credible universities and colleges, government health sites, or licensed public or not-for-profit addiction and mental health services. Here are a few examples of credible online supports:

- Anxiety Canada: www.anxietycanada.com/
- Wellness Together Canada: ca.portal.gs/

Substance Use

Substances are anything that alters your mood, mind, or state. They include things like alcohol, caffeine, tobacco or vaping products, cannabis, illegal drugs, and prescription or over-the-counter medications.



How is substance use connected to your mental health?

Using substances changes your brain's ability to deal with negative feelings. The more substances you use, and the more often you use them, puts your mental health at risk. Eventually, you'll develop a tolerance for any substance you're using, which means you'll need to use more of it to get the same effect. Over time, you may experience memory loss and more negative feelings like anger, aggression, sadness, or thoughts of suicide.

Using substances to cope with difficult feelings, thoughts, or situations, or using substances to hide your depression and anxiety, can make the symptoms of mental illness worse and harder to manage over time.

Ask for help if you:

- use substances to cope with feelings and situations (e.g., sadness, conflict)
- have friends, family, or co-workers tell you they're concerned about your substance use
- hide your substance use from family and friends
- have increased your substance use over time
- find it hard to give up or cut down
- have money or legal problems because of your substance use

All substances can be misused, even if your doctor prescribes them or if you purchase them over-the-counter.



What can I do to get help?

Make a plan. Talk to a healthcare or service care provider about your substance use and symptoms (e.g., when are you using, how much, how often). They can help you make a plan to manage your substance use and refer you to supports in your area.

Reach out. Talk to friends, family, or someone you trust about your substance use and how they can support you in managing it.

Seek support. There are many services and support groups available to help you. For more information about services in your area, call the Addiction Services Helpline at [1-866-332-2322](tel:1-866-332-2322).

If your work has a Family Employee Assistance Program (FEAP), they can help you with counselling support and referrals for services. It's confidential and free.

Substance use and medication interaction.

If you're taking medication for depression or anxiety, or both, mixing it with substances can be dangerous. They may change how your medication works or cause more side effects. Herbal or dietary supplements can interact with your medication too.

For more information about herbal supplements, talk to your healthcare provider, pharmacist, or call the Medication and Herbal Preparation Advice Line at: **1-800-332-1414**.
(5:00pm to 9:00am, seven days a week)

Canada's low risk drinking guidelines.

- Women: 10 drinks a week, with no more than 2 drinks a day most days.
- Men: 15 drinks a week, with no more than 3 drinks a day most days.
- The safest choice is no alcohol when you're:
 - taking medication or other drugs that interact with alcohol
 - living with mental health or physical health problems
 - living with alcohol dependence
 - pregnant, breast feeding, or planning to get pregnant
 - responsible for the safety of others
 - driving a vehicle, using machinery or tools, or doing any dangerous physical activity
 - making important decisions

Source: *Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2018)*

For more information, go to:
www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page12491.aspx

Social Support

Having a strong social support network with healthy social connections is an important part of managing your symptoms.

Your social support network is the group of people that you count on, such as your neighbours, family, friends, co-workers, people in your faith or spiritual community, Elders, healthcare and service care providers, and peer support groups.

People in your support network provide:

- ✓ friendship (e.g., social belonging, feeling connected, people to do things with)
- ✓ information (e.g., advice, guidance, ideas, opinions, information to help solve problems)
- ✓ practical support (e.g., looking after children, cooking, laundry, a place to stay, financial help)
- ✓ emotional support (e.g., empathy, concern, trust, love, acceptance, encouragement, caring)



Why is social support good for your mental health?

- ↑ it increases your confidence (e.g., feeling valued, supported, supporting others)
- ↑ it increases your brain function (e.g., socializing helps your mind stay fit)
- ↓ it decreases the amount of time you spend alone (e.g., feeling less alone, lonely, bored)
- ↓ it decreases your stress (e.g., sharing with others, problem-solving, seeing different points of view)

What does a healthy relationship look like?

- it's built on safety and trust
- you're there for each other and you share what's happening in your lives
- you encourage and support one another
- you understand and respect each other's opinions
- you balance how much you give and take from each other
- you can disagree and know it's okay to talk about your differences

What does an unhealthy relationship look like?

Unhealthy relationships can harm your emotional and physical health.

Signs of an unhealthy relationship may include:

- feeling afraid of your partner
- avoiding certain topics so you don't anger your partner
- your partner:
 - humiliates, criticizes you, or puts you down
 - blames you for their abusive actions or behaviour
 - has an unpredictable temper
 - is very jealous and possessive
 - controls where you go, or keeps you from seeing family or friends

Abuse is never okay. You deserve a healthy and safe life. If you're having trouble getting out of an abusive relationship, you're not alone. For help or advice, call the Alberta Provincial Abuse Helpline at: [1-855-357-9339](tel:1-855-357-9339).

If you're in immediate danger, call [911](tel:911).

How do I increase my social support network?

Connect. Use technology (e.g., video chat, phone, text) to connect with family or friends that live far away.

Build relationships. Keep your healthy relationships and make them stronger. If you're married or have a partner, work to improve your communication skills and make your relationship stronger with workshops or shared activities.

Support others. When you can, listen to others, be encouraging, and offer advice when asked.

Use supports. Join a peer support group to connect with others, get advice, and encouragement.

Meet people in your community. Take part in community events (e.g., festivals, pow wows, community gardens) or go for a walk around your neighbourhood.

Volunteer. To find volunteer opportunities in your area, go to: volunteeralberta.ab.ca/

Get out of the house. Check with your community centre, local library, or online to find activities that you can do.

Let go of relationships that are unhealthy or bring you down.

Spend time with people you feel comfortable and relaxed with. Some people feel energized by being with lots of people, while others prefer to be with only one or two people at a time. Do what feels comfortable for you.



Face-to-face communication is best. Try to balance face-to-face and online support.

What about social support from pets?

If you like animals, caring for a pet may help you be more active, decrease anxiety, add structure to your day, and help you feel more optimistic. However, pets can take a lot of time, responsibility, and money.

Things to consider before getting a pet:

- how long of a commitment they will be (e.g., parrots can live up to 50 years, tortoises can live 25 to 100 years, dogs and cats can live 10 to 20 years)
- expected and unexpected costs (e.g., food, grooming, regular check-ups, spaying or neutering, illness)
- time (e.g., walks, cage cleaning, training, picking up after them)
- potential for allergies
- dietary requirements (e.g., prescription food, vitamins, supplements)

If you're thinking about getting a pet, consider volunteering at an animal shelter, fostering, or asking someone with a pet if you can spend time with their pet first.



Creativity

Creativity is more than doing something artistic like painting, drawing, or sculpting, it's also about trying something that challenges your mind, encourages you to learn something new, and allows you to express yourself.

Experiment with your creativity to find out what you like. You don't need to have a great talent. Pick anything you like and explore it (e.g., playing an instrument, building something, gardening, dancing). If you don't find something you like right away, keep looking. You might surprise yourself and discover some hidden talents!

Being creative can improve your mental health and well-being. When you do a creative activity you enjoy, it helps reduce your blood pressure, slows your breathing, decreases your heart rate, and releases endorphins (chemicals in your brain) that help you feel good.

Creative activities can:

- help you relax and feel less stressed
- improve your mood
- increase your confidence
- activate your imagination
- improve your focus and concentration
- help you problem-solve
- encourage you to meet new people

Tips to be more creative.

Be curious. Open yourself up to new experiences.

Find your fit. Pick something that fits your personality, schedule, and budget.

Be kind to yourself. You don't need to be perfect, just enjoy what you're doing.

Invite others. Try an activity that you can do with friends or family (e.g., painting, photography, singing).

Try doing virtual activities like online music lessons or virtual cooking classes.



Check with your local library or community centre for activities in your area.



Physical Activity

When you feel tired, have no energy, or feel anxious it can be hard to be active. Being inactive for long periods can lead to low or poor mental health, and creates a cycle that's hard to break.

How do I break the inactivity cycle?

Being physically active is about starting with something small. It doesn't need to be a full workout or something really strenuous. Doing something for just one minute can be enough to get you started.

Sometimes it can be helpful to set a small goal for yourself. For example: "I'm going to walk up and down the stairs two times and then I'm done. I can even do it in my pyjamas."

If you feel like doing more, then set another little goal for yourself (e.g., "I'm going to do it one more time and then I can be done.").

Regular physical activity can:

- decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety, boost your mood, and improve self-esteem
- distract you from negative thoughts and help you focus on different, more positive things
- promote social connections—joining a class or smiling at someone when you're out for a walk can help improve your mood
- reduce stress—activity can put good strain on your body and teaches it to cope with stress
- increase your endurance, give you more energy, and help your heart and lungs work better
- improve sleep—it helps you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer

How active should I be?

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that adults get 150 minutes (2.5 hours) or more of moderate-to-vigorous aerobic activity (e.g., brisk walking, running, cycling) a week. Moderate-to-vigorous intensity means you increase your heart rate, breathe deeper, and may sweat a little.

To help improve your strength and make your bones stronger try to include strengthening activities like push-ups, lifting weights, and yard work at least 2 days a week.

If you haven't been active for a while, start slowly and build gradually. Choose an activity that you're comfortable with like swimming, walking, or climbing stairs.

Once an activity gets easier, try making it harder or do it for longer.



Make it your goal to be active most days of the week, especially on days you feel down, worried, or stressed.

For some people, physical activity can reduce the desire to use substances.

Spread your activity out over the days of the week. If possible, aim to do a minimum of 10 minutes at a time. If not, start with what you can do.



What else can I do to be active?

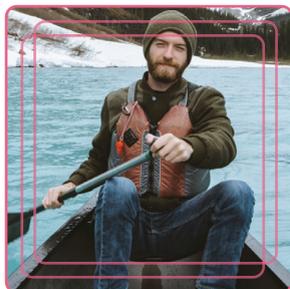
Make an activity plan. Schedule time to do an activity that you like. Set an alarm, write it on your calendar, or put a note somewhere you know you'll see it. Be gentle with yourself and do what you can.

Talk to your family and friends. They can provide support and encouragement and even be active with you.

Take regular breaks at work. Get up and move around, stretch, or go for a walk at lunch.

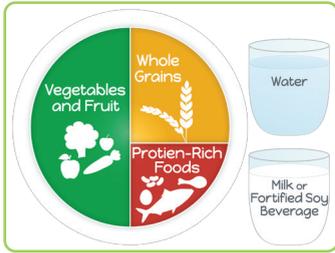
Be active in nature. Go outside and do something you like (e.g., hike, yoga, skate, ski).

Track your activity. Keep track of when you're active and how you feel to help keep you motivated.



Healthy Eating

Good nutrition provides the nutrients your brain needs to make the neurotransmitters (natural chemicals) that affect your memory, learning, sleep, appetite, and feelings of well-being. Healthy eating is one way to help balance your mood, cope with stress, and stay focused.



Create a healthy plate.

Your body and brain need a balance of carbohydrates, protein, fat, fibre, and nutrients at every meal. It uses these things for growth, development, repair, activity, learning, and good mental health.



Healthy eating tips.

Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit.

These foods are the best source of many vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients (natural plant chemicals) that support brain health. They also provide energy to your body and brain.

Choose whole grains.

Whole grains provide energy for your brain and body and supply nutrients that help make neurotransmitters. They're also good sources of phytonutrients, fibre, and other important vitamins and minerals.

Include protein-rich foods.

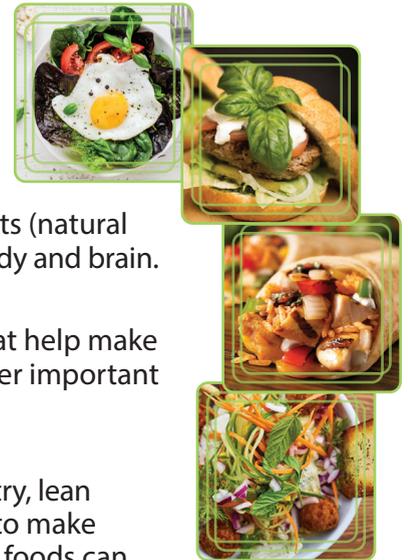
Protein-rich foods (e.g., legumes, nuts, seeds, tofu, soy, fish, shellfish, eggs, poultry, lean red meat, wild game) have higher amounts of the nutrients your body needs to make neurotransmitters and to support growth and tissue repair. Many protein-rich foods can help provide the iron that's needed to carry oxygen through your body and they can help you feel full for longer.

Enjoy milk products and fortified soy beverages.

Milk products and fortified soy beverages provide calcium and protein to help neurotransmitters work in your brain. These drinks also provide vitamin D and other nutrients that help build strong bones. Other plant-based beverages (e.g., coconut, almond, potato, oat, rice, hemp, cashew) are low in protein, and may not have as much calcium and vitamin D.

Include foods that are high in omega-3 fats.

Omega-3 fats are important for the growth and health of your brain and nerves. The best source of omega-3 fats are certain types of fish and seafood, including salmon, rainbow trout, char, sardines, oysters, sole, and tuna. Vegetarian sources of omega-3 fats include tofu, soybeans, seaweed, walnuts, canola oil, flax, hemp seeds, and chia seeds.



Enjoy natural foods.

Foods that are as close to their natural form (e.g., fresh, frozen) provide more of the nutrients needed to promote good mental health. Processed foods have added fats, sugar, salt, and fewer of the nutrients your brain and body need for repair and growth. Some canned foods, such as vegetables, fruit, and beans, still provide many nutrients. Look for options with no added salt, sugar, or fat.

Choose healthy drinks.

Make water your drink of choice. Drinking enough fluid throughout the day is important for energy, memory, and focus. Dehydration can cause headaches and fatigue. You need 1,800 to 2,600 ml (7 to 10 cups) of fluid each day.

Water, milk, fortified soy beverages, vegetables, and fruit are the best sources of fluid.

What about supplements?

Healthy foods are the best source of vitamins, minerals, and omega-3 fats. There's not enough research to know if larger amounts of other nutrients benefit or harm the brain. If you think you're not getting all the nutrients you need from food, talk to a dietitian or healthcare provider before you start taking any vitamin, mineral, herbal, or natural health product.

What else can I do to improve my brain health?

Plan ahead. To help you eat well and regularly, plan your meals a few days ahead. Make double batches of your favourite foods, so you have leftovers or freezer meals when your mood or energy is low.

Skipping meals can lower your mood and make you feel irritable.

Try a food diary for at least one week. Write down how you feel before you eat and record the foods you eat. Pay attention to how you feel until the next time you eat and write this down too. Look for common patterns or reactions to the food and drinks you choose.

Enjoy meals with others. Food is a great way to make connections with other people. Invite someone to join you for a meal or coffee break at work. Make time to prepare meals at home with friends or family. Try a cooking class to meet new people, discover new foods, and learn new recipes.

Limit drinks with caffeine and alcohol. The caffeine in coffee, tea, pop, and energy drinks can make you feel anxious, nervous, or restless. Caffeine can cause headaches, racing thoughts, or poor sleep patterns. Alcohol may lower your mood, interrupt your sleep, and interact with medication.



Pay attention to any changes in your eating habits like losing interest in eating or eating past the point that you feel full. These may be clues that you're struggling with your mood.

Relaxation

When you feel stressed, your body responds by activating its stress or fight-or-flight response. This is your body's emergency response system that helps you face challenges and deal with dangerous or stressful situations. It increases your focus, speeds up your reaction time, and prepares you to respond to a situation. When the situation is over, your stress response usually stops and your body relaxes.

When you have stress that goes on for long periods of time (e.g., relationship problems, difficulty at work) your body's stress response system may be on most of the time. This makes it harder to shut it off and leads to chronic or long-term stress, which can affect your health and make it harder for you to cope with stress and depression or anxiety, or both.



Your body's relaxation response.

Your body's relaxation response is the exact opposite of your stress response. It works by decreasing your heart rate, muscle tension, and releasing endorphins (chemicals in your brain) that help you feel good.

Relaxation techniques can help you:

- feel good about yourself
- find more balance between home and work
- concentrate better
- sleep better
- have a sense of control
- feel more connected to your body, mind, emotions, and people around you
- feel less worried
- have more energy
- have a more positive outlook on life

Things you can do every day to help you relax and manage stress.

Be active. Run, walk, or bike. Try relaxing exercises like yoga or gentle stretching.

Be creative. Draw, dance, or build something.

Make time for yourself. Do things to take care of you (e.g., massage, listen to music).

Get outside. Go to the park, sit by a stream or near trees.

Unplug. Take breaks from technology.

Spend time with others. Play a game, talk, go for a hike, or do a puzzle.

Practice relaxation techniques. Mindfulness, calm breathing, or progressive muscle relaxation.



How can I fit relaxation practices into my life?

- Relaxation takes practice. Set one or two times to practice relaxation every day.
- Be gentle on yourself. If you miss a few days or weeks, start up again.
- Find techniques you like and you'll be more likely to keep using them.
- When you exercise, add relaxation to it by being mindful. For example, if you're doing resistance training, focus on your breathing and coordinate your movements with your breath. You can also pay attention to how your body feels as you move.

Relaxation techniques.

There isn't one relaxation technique that works for everyone. It's possible that practicing relaxation techniques might make you feel silly or awkward at first, and you may even fall asleep during these activities. If this happens to you, it's okay. Be gentle with yourself and try a few different techniques to see what works best for you.

Here are two techniques to get you started:

Deep Breathing

1. Sit comfortably.
2. Close your eyes, if you're comfortable doing so.
3. Count to 5 as you breathe in through your nose—don't hold your breath.
4. Count to 5 as you breathe out through your nose—adjust your count as needed (e.g., 4 in, 4 out; 6 in, 6 out).
5. While you breathe, try focusing on a positive emotion (e.g., calmness, gratitude, ease).
6. Practice this for 3 minutes to start—then slowly increase your time to 5-10 minutes.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

PMR involves focusing on different muscle groups, tightening those muscles, and then letting them relax.

1. Find a comfortable place away from distractions and noise.
2. Lay down or sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor. Relax your hands on your lap.
3. Close your eyes, if you're comfortable doing so.
4. Starting with your feet, breathe in and tense or tighten the muscles only in your feet, hard but not to the point of pain or cramping, for 4 to 10 seconds.
5. As you breathe out completely relax the muscles in your feet.
6. Repeat steps 4 to 5 for each muscle group in your body.
7. Once you're finished, relax for a few minutes. When you're ready, open your eyes.

Tips for each muscle group.

Feet. Curl your toes and squeeze your feet.

Legs. Squeeze your calves, the front of your thighs and the back of your thighs.

Buttocks. Squeeze your buttocks muscles together.

Abdomen, chest, and back. Tighten your belly, back, and chest muscles.

Arms. Squeeze your hands and make fists, tighten the front and back of your arms so they are stiff.

Shoulders and neck. Pull your shoulders up to your ears, tighten your neck.

Face and head. Tense your face, squeeze your eyes and mouth shut, tighten the back of your head.

Full body. Tense all the muscles in your body at the same time: feet, legs, buttocks, abdomen, chest, back, arms, shoulders, neck, face, and head—pull your chin to your chest.

Sleep

Sleep helps your body restore, repair, and heal itself (e.g., repairs blood vessels, helps blood sugar control, boosts the immune system). Sleep improves your memory, energy levels, and endurance. It also helps you make decisions, solve problems, pay attention, learn new things, manage your feelings, cope with change, and be flexible in your thinking.

Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night—but everyone's different. The need for sleep changes with age and activity. If you're older and less active, you'll likely need less sleep. If you're younger, active, or have stress, you'll likely need more sleep. It's important to know how much sleep you need to feel good.



What if I'm having trouble sleeping?

Everyone has trouble sleeping sometimes. There are nights when it may be hard to fall asleep, stay asleep, or you wake up so many times it feels like you haven't slept at all. This is normal. These types of sleep problems are often caused by stress and will usually get better after a night or two. If you have trouble sleeping for more than a few weeks, it can affect your mental health and well-being.

What is insomnia?

Insomnia is when you don't get the amount of sleep you need to wake up feeling rested and refreshed. Some common symptoms of insomnia include:

- trouble falling asleep, even if you're really tired
- needing sleeping pills or other substances to fall asleep
- trouble concentrating
- feeling irritable, drowsy, or tired during the day
- having depression or anxiety, or both
- waking up many times during the night or too early in the morning

What can I do to sleep well?

Be consistent. Have a regular bedtime routine and keep it on the weekends too. Try things like: a warm shower, caffeine-free tea, relaxing music, relaxation techniques, or reading as part of your sleep routine.

Keep your sleep space quiet, dark, and cool. Use your bed for sleep and sex only so you connect it with sleeping. When you can't sleep, get out of bed, and do something relaxing for 20 minutes and try again.

Manage stress. Find ways to manage stress like asking for help when you need it or taking a stress management class.

Limit screen time. Turn off screens and dim the lights in your home 1 hour before bedtime. Darkness helps your body make a hormone called melatonin, that makes you feel sleepy. Light stops your body from making melatonin.

Regular physical activity. Exercise earlier in the day and try to avoid vigorous exercise 3 hours before bedtime.

Reduce your substance use. Using substances too close to bedtime can make falling and staying asleep more difficult. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about your medication, including non-prescription medication, to see when the best time of day is to take them.

The quality of your sleep and how you feel after sleeping is more important than how many hours you sleep or how fast you fall asleep.

If you have any concerns about your sleep, talk to your healthcare provider.

Thinking Strategies

Helpful thinking isn't the same as positive thinking. Sometimes unhelpful thoughts can be accurate (e.g., a stressful event will happen). Helpful thinking means giving yourself the message that you can handle any stressful thing that might happen. It's the kind of thinking that leaves you feeling hopeful or at least that you can cope with the challenge.

Tips for managing depression.

Keep a mood diary. Write down what increases your depression (e.g., situations, demands, lack of sleep) and how long the symptoms last. Look for patterns and see if you can make changes in your daily life that might help.

Set small goals. You may be too overwhelmed to complete everyday tasks like doing the dishes or getting groceries. Make a list of things you want to do and set a date you want them done by. You may even want to prioritize tasks in order of importance.

Start with the small stuff. For example, pay your bills by Tuesday and get groceries on Thursday. You can also manage bigger tasks by breaking them down into smaller tasks. For example:

Cleaning the house

- ✓ Saturday: kitchen
- ✓ Sunday: bathrooms
- ✓ Monday: bedroom
- ✓ Tuesday: living room

Challenge your thoughts. One of the best ways to change how you feel is to change the way you think. Try to challenge unhelpful thoughts.

Ask yourself questions like:

- "Have I confused a thought with a fact?"
- "Is my opinion of this based in fact or is it based on how I feel?"
- "What would I tell a friend if they had the same thought?"
- "Is there another way I can look at this situation?"

Give yourself helpful messages. Write messages for yourself that will help you do what you need to do (e.g., "I've got this," "Believe in yourself," "Do what you fear," "Do the best you can right now."). Put them in places where you'll see them.



Keep a journal. Write down any unhelpful thoughts you have, in one column. In a separate column, write down a more helpful thought.

Unhelpful Thought

I'll never get this job. I shouldn't even try.

Everything goes badly for me.

Helpful Thought

I may or may not get this job, but I'm qualified and have a lot of good skills. I'll do my best.

Some things go badly for me, just like they do for anyone else, but some things go well.

Tips for managing anxiety.

Keep a mood diary. Write down when you feel anxious, what increases your anxiety (e.g., situations, demands, lack of sleep), and how long the symptoms last. Look for patterns and see if you can make changes in your daily life that might help.

Challenge your thoughts. Your thoughts can affect how you feel, they can make you feel anxious, or they can help you feel calm. Write down things you can say to encourage yourself when you start feeling anxious (e.g., "I can do this.", "I've felt this way before and it turned out okay.", "This is my anxiety talking, I don't have to listen to it.").

Tackle uncertainty head on. It's common to have anxious thoughts when you're feeling uncertain about the future. These thoughts can take the form of 'what if' questions and may lead to behaviours such as rechecking things or constantly needing reassurance from others. Work on feeling more comfortable with the unknown.

Ask yourself:

- "What's the chance that will happen?"
- "If it does, how will I handle it?"



Things you can do in the moment.

Focus on the present. Worries and anxious thoughts are usually focused on the past or the future. Bring your attention to the present. Be aware of your breathing, how your body feels, and the sights and sounds around you. If you have anxious thoughts while doing this, acknowledge them and then gently bring your focus back to the present.

Take a mental break. Take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes and imagine yourself somewhere that makes you feel calm (e.g., a special place, being with a certain person). Use your senses when thinking about yourself there—What do you hear? Smell? See? Touch? Taste?

Your opinion matters. To tell us what you think of this resource go to:
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