

Depression

Depression can affect anyone but people with heart failure are more likely to become depressed. For every 10 people with heart failure, 5 to 7 will likely experience depression.

What is Depression?

It is a medical condition where a person feels sad, loses interest in daily activities, withdraws from people, and feels hopeless about the future.

Depression is different from grief, sadness related to an event, or low energy.

How can a health care professional tell a person has depression?

You must have a number of the following signs **most of the day, every day for at least 2 weeks**:

- Constantly feeling sad for no reason
- Feeling hopeless, guilty, or worthless
- Little or no interest in people or activities you use to enjoy
- Feeling really tired or low on energy
- Sleeping too much or not enough
- Feeling like you are speeding up or slowing down
- Unplanned changes in your weight (weight loss or weight gain)
- Changes in your appetite
- Having trouble thinking, concentrating, or remembering
- Having trouble making decisions
- Thinking about hurting yourself or about dying



How can depression affect your heart failure?

Depression can make your heart failure worse. If you are depressed, you will find it harder to do the things you need to do to manage your heart failure (such as exercising, eating well, limiting fluids, and taking your medicines as directed).



What causes depression?

Depression may be caused by one factor or a number of factors. Some factors that might cause depression include:

- An imbalance in the natural chemicals in the brain
- A heart condition
- A chronic health condition such as anemia or hypothyroid
- Difficult life events such as:
 - Death of a loved one
 - Divorce
 - Loss of a job
 - Childbirth
- Using too much alcohol or drugs
- Family history of depression

Depression is not caused by a personal weakness.

Sometimes when people feel very depressed and overwhelmed, they start to think about hurting themselves. If you have started to make a plan to hurt yourself, go to the nearest emergency room right away.

Support for those in crisis
Crisis Line Association of BC
1-800-784-2433
1-800-SUICIDE

How do you know if you are depressed?

Ask yourself the following question (Choose the number that most reflects your feeling over the last two weeks.)

Over the last two weeks, how much have I been bothered by feeling sad, down, or uninterested in life?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(None)			(A little)			(Moderate)			(Severe)

When should you get help?

If you scored 3 or lower

- You are probably coping pretty well. Your feelings of depression are probably not interfering with your life too much.

If you scored 4 to 6

- You are probably **mildly to moderately** depressed. Talk to your family doctor. Try some of the ideas on this page to help you with your depression.

If you scored between 7 to 9

- You are probably **severely** depressed. See your family doctor or a mental health professional right away.

Some Ideas on How to Manage Depression

Set small goals

- ✓ Set small self-care goals (taking a shower, taking a walk, eating well-balanced meal)
- ✓ Set small household goals (doing the dishes, paying some bills, take care of business you have been avoiding)

Watch out for negative thinking

- ✓ Try to be aware of your thoughts. (Negative thinking is very common with depression.)
- ✓ Ask yourself what you would say to a friend who had that negative thought.
- ✓ Try to be kinder to yourself.

Socialize and have fun

- ✓ Reach out to friends and family.
- ✓ Make social plans and go even if you “don’t feel like it”.
- ✓ Make time for pleasant activities. You may need to gently force yourself to do these things. Don’t wait until you want to!

Problem solving

- ✓ Identify and define problems.
- ✓ Make a list of possible actions to address the problem.
- ✓ Identify pros and cons for each action.
- ✓ Pick the best action and try it out.
- ✓ Think about how it went.

How is depression treated?

It is essential to get medical treatment. Some effective treatments include:

- Talk Therapy – especially Cognitive Behavioural Therapy - is helpful for people with heart conditions.
- Medicines to improve mood.
- Lifestyle changes such as exercise and proper sleep.