

# Your Pathway for Managing Anxiety and Depression with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

## How might IBD affect my mental health?

- You may feel stressed, anxious, or depressed when thinking about your IBD diagnosis.
- These feelings can negatively influence your IBD symptoms and have a negative impact on your quality of life.
- Generally, your primary care provider (like your family doctor) can help you manage mental health symptoms.

This pathway is a map for you and your healthcare team to follow. It helps you understand the impact of IBD on your mental health and connects you to tools and resources to help with your mental health symptoms.

You and your healthcare team may modify the pathway to best suit your healthcare needs.

If symptoms cannot be managed over time, you and your healthcare team may decide a referral to a specialist would be helpful.

## 1. Check your symptoms

Have you felt anxious or depressed in the past 2 weeks? This might include:

- Having little pleasure in doing things.
- Having little energy.
- Feeling bad about yourself or hopeless.
- Feeling on edge or unable to control worrying.
- Becoming easily annoyed
- Feeling like something awful might happen.

## 2. Make lifestyle changes and access resources to manage your symptoms

- Identify what causes you stress and seek ways to manage it.
- Try to get at least 20 minutes of physical activity daily.
- Try to get between 7-8 hours of sleep daily.
- Access resources and tools that can assist you in managing these feelings.
- For a list of resources, see page 3.

## Visit emergency services immediately or call 9-1-1 if you have these symptoms:

- Feeling that you would be better off dead.
- Feelings of hurting yourself or someone else in some way.

Talk to your healthcare team if your symptoms don't improve, get worse, or keep interfering with your everyday activities.

Once you find something that works for you, stick with it.

You may need to keep trying other options to find what works best to manage your symptoms.

## 3. Medicine that may be tried

- There are many options to reduce anxiety and depression symptoms if lifestyle changes do not help.
- Talk with your healthcare team about what medicine may be right for you.

### **Working to manage anxiety and depression with IBD can take several months:**

- Your healthcare team will ask you questions about your health and do a physical exam. They will also review any medicines you are taking.
- They may suggest certain tests to learn more about possible causes of your symptoms.
- They will talk with you about possible lifestyle habits that may be causing your symptoms and how you can make changes that can help you feel better.
- You may find it helpful to write down your symptoms and what seems to cause them. You and your healthcare team can make a plan to help manage your symptoms using this information.
- Together, you may decide to try medicines to help in treating your symptoms.

### **To manage your symptoms, try to:**

- Identify what causes you stress and work on reducing it. You may want to try yoga, meditation, counselling, or a stress reduction program.
- Get at least 20 minutes of physical activity daily. Aim for 150 minutes each week (for example, walking, biking, gardening, stairs, or your favourite sports).
- Make an appointment with a behavioural health specialist such as a psychologist or counsellor.
- Explore tools and resources to help manage symptoms.


### **Seeing a specialist is only recommended if:**

- Your symptoms continue or get worse after following treatment and management options in the pathway.
- You and your healthcare providers identify concerning symptoms or test results.

### **You can find more information in the recommended tools and resources on the following pages.**

### **Write any notes or questions you may have here:**

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## Tools and resources for IBD patients to help manage symptoms of anxiety and depression

Many different websites, apps, and other resources may help reduce feelings of anxiety or depression. Below is a description of several resources that may be helpful. They are described based on how structured the resource is and the anticipated time commitment associated with the resources.

### MindShift CBT App

Uses a combination of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and mindfulness techniques to help improve anxiety symptoms.

- Developer: Anxiety Canada
- Additional features: thought journal, habit and mood tracker, community forum, goal setting
- For: Anxiety, Stress, Depression
- Structure: self-guided
- Time commitment: Little - use as many or as few features as you want
- To download: [iOS](#) | [Android](#)

### My Anxiety Plan

Module-based program designed using cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) principles to help you understand anxiety and learn strategies to help manage it.

- Developer: Anxiety Canada
- Additional features: None
- For: Anxiety, Stress
- Structure: 6 modules composed of information videos
- Time commitment: Little - estimated 4 hours to complete
- To access: [Website](#)

### CBT-i Coach App

Uses cognitive behavioural therapy-insomnia (CBT-i) principles to help improve sleep and reduce insomnia.

- Developer: US Department of Veteran Affairs
- Additional features: Information about sleep, sleep sounds, mindfulness and breathing exercises, sleep diary that can be exported and shared with your healthcare provider
- For: Insomnia, Fatigue
- Structure: self-guided
- Time commitment: Little- use as many or as few features as you want
- To download: [iOS](#) | [Android](#)

### Better Choices, Better Health Chronic Disease Self-Management Program

Workshop series designed to help those with chronic diseases learn how to translate knowledge into action and find solutions to their challenges.

- Developer: Alberta Health Services
- For: Anxiety, Overall Well-being
- Structure: workshops are led by an instructor
- Time commitment: Significant - Six 2.5-hour workshops, virtual and in-person offerings throughout the year.
- To access: [Website](#)



### **Better Choices, Better Health Chronic Pain Self-Management Program**

Workshop series designed to help those with chronic pain learn how to translate knowledge into action and find solutions to their challenges.

- Developer: Alberta Health Services
- For: Chronic pain
- Structure: workshops are led by an instructor
- Time commitment: Significant - Six 2.5-hour workshops, virtual and in-person offerings throughout the year.
- To access: [Website](#)

### **ParticipACTION**

Provide people with a variety of exercise videos to help them become more active.

- Developer: ParticipACTION
- Additional features: Exercise and workout videos for all levels - including seated workouts, dance cardio, high-intensity strength, boxing, yoga, and stretching.
- For: Movement, General Well-being, Fatigue
- Structure: videos include demonstrations from instructors
- Time commitment: Little - Videos range from 5 minutes to 45 minutes
- To access: [Website](#)

### **Positive Coping with Health Conditions Workbook**

A self-care workbook that tackles how to cope with a health condition. Sections on managing worry, managing depressive thinking, managing anger, relationship building, and more.

- Developer: Simon Fraser University and Health BC
- For: Anxiety, Stress, Depression, General Well-being
- Structure: multiple sections that include learnings and activities
- Time commitment: Moderate - can go at own pace
- To access: [Website](#)

### **Antidepressant Skills Workbook**

A self-care manual that provides strategies for managing and working through depressive symptoms.

- Developer: Simon Fraser University
- Goal: A self-care manual that provides strategies for managing and working through depressive symptoms.
- Additional features: Available in English, French, Punjabi, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Farsi
- For: Depression
- Structure: multiple sections that include learnings and activities
- Time commitment: Moderate - can go at own pace
- To access: [Website](#)



## Primary Care Network Workshops

Offer a variety of workshops designed to help patients in Alberta. Workshop topics include stress and anxiety management.

- Developer: Primary Care Network
- Additional features: None
- For: Stress, Anxiety, General Well-Being
- Structure: workshops led by an instructor
- Time commitment: Moderate - most workshops are one time and there are many virtual offerings
- To access offerings: [Website](#)

## Don't have a primary care provider? Here are some options:

- Alberta PCN: [albertafindadoctor.ca](http://albertafindadoctor.ca)
- Alberta College of Family Physicians: [acfp.ca/find-a-family-physician](http://acfp.ca/find-a-family-physician)

If you need to access mental health services and you don't have a primary care provider, you can visit a mental health and wellness service center in your community. Use the [AHS Healthcare Locator](#) to find mental health and wellness services near you.

## Want to see a therapist or counsellor? Here are some options:

- The Psychologists' Association of Alberta: [findhelp.paa-ab.ca](http://findhelp.paa-ab.ca)

