

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Men and depression

It's not a sign of weakness, it's a fact. Guys get depressed. Depression affects 840,000 men every year in Canada, and is the second leading cause of disability worldwide.

Men's Mental Health Awareness Day, June 14, aims to raise awareness of signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, helping reduce the stigma that often prevents men from seeking help, which includes a number of misconceptions about depression.

Although there are still many misconceptions when it comes to depression, people's ideas about it have changed over the years. New technology and research show that depression is an illness which impacts how a person's brain and body function, just like asthma or heart failure.

Symptoms of depression

Changes in the levels of certain brain chemicals and activity of some areas in the brain are associated with depression. No one thing causes this. Many things, including your genes, stressful events, illness, and abusing drugs, or taking some types of medicine are all involved in developing depression.

Some misconceptions include:

- **Depression only happens if something bad happens.** The reality is that depression may start after a stressful event, but other things also may trigger it. Sometimes depression happens with no identified cause, particularly in people who have been depressed before.
- **If you can't get over depression, you're weak.** Depression is not about your character, it is an illness. You can't force yourself to get over it any more than you can make asthma or a heart attack go away.

- **Depression always will get better by itself and doesn't need treatment.** Although a few people get over depression on their own, most people need treatment. People with depression can be treated and return to work and home routines, however without treatment, depression can last for months or even years.

Do you have a man in your life who you think may be depressed?

If you're worried about a loved one or a friend, you probably want to talk to him about your concerns. Here are some things you can do:

Tell the person about depression and why you are concerned

- Depression is not about laziness or weakness. It is more common than people realize, and is nothing to be embarrassed about.
- Point out the symptoms of depression that you have noticed in your family member or friend, and say why these symptoms worry you. Use a supportive and caring tone of voice while you are doing this.

Explain why the person needs to see a health professional

- Explain that very few people get over depression on their own. Most people need some type of treatment. The sooner someone gets treatment, the sooner he will feel better.
- Point out that there are many types of professionals who treat depression and many types of treatment. Just because a person is depressed doesn't mean that he needs to see a psychologist or take medicine. A family doctor or a counsellor may be able to help.
- Point out that depression might be caused by another problem. For example, genetic vulnerability, stress, medical problems, and medications all can cause symptoms of depression. A doctor can help diagnose this and provide the person with treatment options.

For more information on depression, visit myhealthalberta.ca or to access treatment and support call Health Link at 811.