

# Depression & Anxiety Self-Management for Teens



Produced by  
Mental Health Promotion & Illness Prevention, Provincial Addiction & Mental Health  
10101 Southport Road SW  
Calgary, Alberta , T2W 3N2  
Email: [hp dip.mh.earlyid@ahs.ca](mailto:hp dip.mh.earlyid@ahs.ca)

Alberta Health Services  
Depression & Anxiety Self-Management for Teens.  
Version 02.  
Created: 2013-02  
Revised: 2018-09  
Next review: 2020-09

Copyright 2018 Alberta Health Services.

This material is protected by Canadian and other international copyright laws. All rights reserved. These materials may not be copied, published, distributed or reproduced in any way in whole or in part without the express written permission of Alberta Health Services. These materials are intended for general information only and are provided on an “as is”, “where is” basis. Although reasonable efforts were made to confirm the accuracy of the information, Alberta Health Services does not make any representation or warranty, express, implied or statutory, as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness, applicability or fitness for a particular purpose of such information. These materials are not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional. Alberta Health Services expressly disclaims all liability for the use of these materials, and for any claims, actions, demands or suits arising from such use.

# Contents

Depression	1
Anxiety	2
Treating Depression and Anxiety	3
Substance Use	4
Social Support	5
Creativity	7
Physical Activity	8
Nutrition	10
Relaxation	12
Sleep	14
Sleep Diary	16
Thinking Strategies	17
Daily Mood Diary for Depression	19
Daily Mood Diary for Anxiety	20

If you're having suicidal thoughts, talking to your friends about how you are feeling can help you feel supported. But it's important to talk to an adult you can trust (e.g., a parent, Elder, teacher, school counsellor, coach), they can help you figure out what steps to take to get the help you need.

If you are unsure who to talk to, help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Health Link: **811**
- Mental Health Help Line: **1-877-303-2642**
- First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: **1-855-242-3310**
  - Online chat counselling service: [www.hopeforwellness.ca](http://www.hopeforwellness.ca)
- Kids Help Phone: **1-800-668-6868**
  - Text **CONNECT** to **686868**

For immediate help call  
**911** or go to the nearest  
emergency department.



# Depression

Everyone faces challenges in life that can leave you feeling sad, hopeless, angry, worried, or on edge. Maybe you had a fight with a family member or friend, did poorly on an exam, or received some bad news. You might feel sad, down, or irritable for a few days or even a week or two. However, if you find healthy ways to cope with these feelings, they usually go away.

There is a difference between feeling depressed and being diagnosed with depression. A depressive mood disorder is when you feel sad or down for more than two weeks, you feel like you can't cope, and this begins to get in the way of your life or responsibilities (e.g., school, activities, relationships, family). Depression can be mild to severe and can change how you think, feel, and act.

## What does depression feel like?

Depression feels different for everyone. For some people, it's an overwhelming feeling of emptiness that you can't explain. Some people feel as if all their emotions and energy have been drained or there's a heavy weight pushing them down. For some people, depression can become unbearable, with thoughts of suicide.

Positive coping skills include things like practicing relaxation techniques, getting enough exercise, eating healthy, and getting enough sleep.

*"Depression made me feel like I was invisible or alone, even when I was standing in the middle of a crowd or just hanging out with my friends."*



## Common symptoms

Depression affects everyone differently. No two people will have the same symptoms.

### Physical

- tired all the time, sluggish or inactive
- sick, run down, or no energy
- headaches or muscle pains
- upset stomach
- changes in appetite (e.g., eating too much or too little)

### Feelings

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

### Behaviour

- trouble sleeping (e.g., too much or too little)
- losing interest in activities and hobbies
- avoiding friends and family
- having trouble concentrating or making decisions
- not finishing things (e.g., school work, chores)
- not being able to cope like you used to
- using alcohol or other substances to make you feel better

### Thoughts

- "People would be better off without me."
- "Nothing good ever happens to me."
- "I'm a failure."
- "It's my fault."
- "I'm worthless."
- "Nobody would notice if I wasn't here anymore."
- "What's the point of living? I wish I were dead."



# Anxiety

It's common to feel anxious in some situations. Anxiety can help you stay focused and alert when you feel threatened, under pressure, or need to make big life 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. When the situation has passed, the feelings of anxiety usually stop. But, if your feelings of anxiety are constant (e.g., lasts for weeks or months) and start to interfere with your relationships and activities, it can be a sign of an anxiety disorder.

If you have depression, you may also have anxiety. Anxiety is not the same as depression but you can experience them both at the same time. Depression and anxiety can have some of the same symptoms.

## What does anxiety feel like?

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

*"Sometimes I would have an overwhelming feeling that something was wrong but I couldn't say what it was. Other times I would have uncontrollable feelings that something bad was about to happen."*

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, speaking in front of people,) 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

Anxiety affects people differently and symptoms can develop slowly over time. You might experience some of the things listed or you may have other symptoms that aren't listed.

### Physical

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

### Feelings

- fear of something bad about to happen
- things don't seem real or they feel strange
- tense, uptight, feeling on edge
- panicky, unsettled, or irritable
- fears that don't make sense but won't go away

### Behaviour

- using substances to make you feel better
- avoiding situations or activities
- starting things and not finishing them
- pacing, fidgeting, or feeling restless
- having trouble sleeping (e.g., too much or too little)
- procrastinating (e.g., putting things off until the last minute)

### Thoughts

- can't concentrate
- thinking about negative things happening
- easily distracted
- trouble remembering
- difficulty letting go of worry
- repetitive thoughts about things going wrong

## Treating Depression and Anxiety

You can start by seeing your healthcare provider to figure out if what you're experiencing is depression and/or anxiety. They'll ask about your symptoms, any recent stressful events, your current substance use, including any medications or over the counter supplements that you're taking. They may ask other questions about your health to make sure there isn't another medical problem or a medicine that is causing your symptoms.

Your healthcare provider will talk to you about treatment options. They may also refer you to a mental health professional who can provide you with more information about depression and/or anxiety and treatment options (e.g., talk therapy like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), coping skills, medication). Treatment options should be easy to understand. If something isn't clear, ask questions. If you're not comfortable speaking with the person you see, it's okay to ask to see someone else.

If psychotherapy or counselling is part of your treatment plan, your healthcare provider may ask if your family can attend some of your sessions. It's often helpful to have your family involved. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about how much your family will be involved in your treatment.

## Managing your symptoms

In addition to the treatment options that your healthcare providers recommend, there are many things you can do yourself to manage your symptoms including:

- social support
- creativity
- physical activity
- nutrition
- relaxation
- sleep
- thinking strategies



If you're prescribed medicine, your symptoms may feel worse when you first start and it can take at least three weeks before you start feeling better. You'll need regular checkups during the first 4 to 6 weeks of starting a medication and regular checkups if a dosage is changed.

If you're not seeing any changes in your symptoms after 3 weeks or if you're feeling worse or having side effects, talk to your healthcare provider. Stopping a medication can make your symptoms worse, and in some cases, can cause additional health complications.

Vlogs, Youtube, and Wikipedia can be a great place to learn about other people's experiences and opinions about depression and/or anxiety but they may also provide you with incorrect or unsafe information. When searching for information on how to manage your symptoms pay attention to the source. Often, websites listed at the top of a search are paying to be listed at the top so that they can sell a product. Just because a website is at the top of list doesn't mean that it's a good source of information. Look for sites from credible universities and colleges, government health sites, or licensed public or not-for-profit addiction and mental health services.



## Substance Use

A substance is anything that changes the way you think, act, and feel. Substances include alcohol, caffeine (e.g., coffee, tea, pop, energy drinks), tobacco or tobacco-like products (e.g., vaping, cigarettes, cigars, chew), cannabis, prescription drugs, and illegal drugs. All substances can be misused, even if your doctor prescribes them or if you purchase them over the counter.

### 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, the higher the risk they pose to your mental health. Eventually, you'll develop a tolerance for the substances 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.

For many teens who try using substances it doesn't turn into a problem. But, if your substance use is causing new or worsening problems in your life (e.g., getting poor grades, avoiding friends, getting into conflict with your parents or siblings, missing work, getting into trouble with the law) talk to someone you trust.

### It's important to ask for help if you:

- use substances to cope with feelings and situations
- 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 friends or family who say they're concerned about your substance use

### What can I do to get help?

Talk to someone you trust—a friend, parent, teacher, or healthcare provider about screening and referral.

Need help now? Call:

- Addiction Help Line 1-866-332-2322
- Health Link 811
- Mental Health Help Line 1-877-303-2642
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868



If you're using substances to help deal with symptoms of anxiety or depression—they may help you feel better for a little while but they can make symptoms worse and harder to manage over time.

Did you know that your brain develops until your mid-twenties? There are serious risks of using drugs before your brain is finished developing. It can alter how your brain matures, including harming certain cognitive (thinking) abilities. It can also increase your chance of developing a substance use problem, both in the short-term and in the future.

# Social Support

Your social support network is the group of people that you can count on, go to for support, and share what's happening in your life.

There are two types of support in your network, informal (e.g., your family, friends and their families, teammates, coaches, people at your school and work, place of faith) and formal (e.g., healthcare providers, school counsellors, teachers, peer support groups, other professionals).

People in your social support network provide:

- emotional support (e.g., empathy, concern, trust, love, acceptance, encouragement, caring)
- information (e.g., advice, guidance, ideas, opinions, information to help solve problems)
- practical support (e.g., giving you rides, helping with homework)
- friendship (e.g., provide connection and a sense of belonging)

## Why is having a social support network good for your mental health?

- it increases confidence (e.g., you feel valued and supported)
- helps you achieve your goals (e.g., doing well on an exam, joining a gym)
- decreases the amount of time you spend alone (e.g., you feel more connected to others, less bored, or lonely)
- improves brain function (e.g., socializing improves social skills; you learn more about people and things)

## What does healthy support look like?

- your relationship is built on safety and trust—there's no fear
- you balance how much you give to and take from others
- you encourage and support each other
- you understand and respect each other's opinions
- you can disagree and know it's okay to talk about your differences
- you both take responsibility for how your words and actions affect each other and people around you

## What is unhealthy support?

Unhealthy relationships can harm your emotional and/or physical health. An emotionally abusive relationship can develop with your friends, boyfriend, girlfriend, parent(s) or others.

Signs of an emotionally abusive relationship may include:

- controlling or tracking your activities and the time you spend with others (e.g., sending repeated texts or making calls to check what you're doing, preventing you from spending time with friends or family, acting jealous of time with others)
- criticizing you, your ideas or making hurtful comments to you or about you
- ignoring you on purpose (e.g., face-to-face, not responding to texts and calls)

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



Spend time with people you feel relaxed with and do things you enjoy. Some people feel energized by being with lots of people, while others do better spending time with one or two people at a time. Do what feels comfortable for you.

Abuse is **never** okay. Let go of relationships that are harmful or bring you down. If you're having trouble getting out of an abusive relationship talk to your parents, teachers, or other adults you trust for help. If the abusive relationship is with a family member or someone who lives with you, ask an adult you trust for help.

## How do I increase my social support network?

- try new things like volunteering or joining a youth group
- ask your friends to join activities with you
- go to events in your community (e.g., celebrations, sporting events, street festivals, pow wow)
- improve the relationships you already have by making plans with people more often
- be specific about your needs when you ask someone for help (e.g., "I'm feeling sad today, would you be able to go to the movies with me?" or "I really need some help with an assignment, would you be able to help me today?")
- spend less time with people that encourage unhealthy habits (e.g., people who brush off what you share, suggest that drinking or using drugs will make you feel better)
- be patient when you're trying to make friends with new people

Enjoy meals with your family and friends as often as you can. Meal times and snack breaks are a great way to connect with other people and boost your mood.



## What about connecting with others through technology?

Using different types of technology (e.g., social media, text, video chat) is one way to increase your social support network. It can make it easier for you to connect with different types of support, make new friends, and increase your connections with existing friends and family that may not live nearby.

Even though connecting with people virtually is a great tool, it isn't the same as spending time with someone in person (face-to-face). In fact, 80% of our communication is done through body language and tone of voice which means that when you connect with people using technology you miss a lot of information.

Did you know? When we communicate with someone in person, we learn a lot more about them and what they want to tell us. This can lead to a higher quality relationship.

# Creativity

Exercise, sleep, and nutrition are vital for your mental health. But did you know that being creative can also improve your mental health and well-being?

Being creative can be calming. When you do a creative activity you enjoy, it slows your breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure. Your brain also releases chemicals that help you feel good.

Experiment with your creativity to find out what you like as a way to express yourself. You don't need to have a great talent to start, just pick something you like and explore it. If you don't find something you like right away, keep looking. You might discover some hidden talents!

## Being creative can help you:

- relax and feel less stressed
- improve your mood
- increase your confidence
- activate your imagination
- develop focus and concentration
- problem-solve and cope
- meet new friends
- learn a new skill

Being creative can be something you do (e.g., play an instrument, build something, colour, dance, or paint) or something like listening to music, viewing art, or reading a book.



## Here are a few tips

- **Be curious and open to new experiences.** It's about fun, not extra stress.
- **Search for and try different activities.** Try online and unplugged activities that are at school, a community centre, library.
- **Do what fits you.** Find 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.
- **Go with someone.** Try an activity that you can do with a friend or family member (e.g., painting, playing instruments, photography, singing).



# Physical Activity

We often hear that being physically active is good for your health, but did you know that it's good for your mental health, too? Regular physical activity releases chemicals in your brain called endorphins. Endorphins help you feel good. Being physically active also regulates some of the chemicals in your brain (e.g., dopamine, serotonin) that are related to depression and anxiety. Being active every day like walking, cycling, or climbing stairs improves your concentration, boosts your mood, and can lead to better self-confidence. It can also decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression.



## Regular physical activity can:

- **Help you have a positive outlook on life and distract you from negative thoughts.** It helps you focus on different, more positive things and leaves you with less time to think about stressors.
- **Improve your physical health.** It increases your endurance, improves your energy level, and helps your heart and lungs work better.
- **Promote social connections.** Playing a team sport or joining a class (e.g., yoga, spin, dance) helps you get to know others. If you walk or run alone, even a small thing like smiling at someone as you pass by can improve your mood.
- **Reduce stress.** Activity can put a good kind of strain on your body and teach it to cope better with stress.
- **Improve sleep.** Regular activity helps you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. Exercising too close to bedtime can make it harder for you to fall asleep so allow 3 hours between exercise and sleep.

## Help break the cycle

It's hard to be active when you feel down, depressed, worried, or stressed. Being inactive for long periods can lead to poor mental health and can create a cycle that gets harder to break. I'd like to be more active but...

Common Problem	Ideas to Try
"I don't feel motivated."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind yourself why being active is important to you.</li> <li>• Focus on the short-term benefits like better sleep and more energy.</li> </ul>
"I have no time."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try 10-minute periods of activity, three times a day.</li> <li>• Be active as you do other things like biking to school or walking to a friend's house.</li> </ul>
"I'm tired and have no energy."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be active when you have energy, like in the morning, at lunch or after school.</li> </ul>
"I have no one to be active with."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask a friend to be active with you.</li> <li>• Join an exercise class, group, or club</li> </ul>



Did you know that regular physical activity can help reduce your desire to use substances?

## How active should you be?

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

According to the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, teens should do at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity, including a variety of aerobic activities (e.g., running, skiing, soccer, skateboarding). Moderate to vigorous intensity means that your heart rate increases, you breathe deeper, and you sweat. In addition to moderate to vigorous physical activity, try to incorporate muscle and bone strengthening activities at least 3 days a week (e.g., push-ups, lifting weights, rock climbing).

## How do you begin?

If you haven't been active for a while, start slowly and build up gradually. But don't overdo it. Doing too much too soon can make you feel worse. To get started, choose an activity you're comfortable with, and once it gets easier, try making it harder, or do it for longer (e.g., go at a faster pace or increase the amount of time you do it.)

It's important to be active every day. Even small amounts of activity are better than nothing at all. Being active is about getting up and moving. Try to find ways to add physical activity to your day (e.g., walk or bike to school, take the stairs.)

If you have health problems, talk to your healthcare provider before starting a new physical activity routine.

## What else can you do to be active?

- **Take regular breaks when studying.** Get up and move around, stretch or do yoga, go for a walk outside, or dance around your room for a few minutes.
- **Be active in nature.** Walk, run, or bike in a park.
- **Set goals for yourself.** Pick an activity for each day of the week ahead of time and put it into your schedule.
- **Keep track of when you're active and how you feel.** This helps keep you motivated.
- **Try a group activity.** Walk with friends, join a class, or play a team sport like soccer, hockey, or basketball.



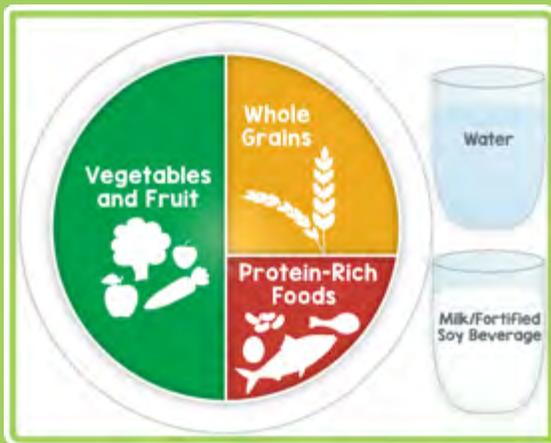


# Nutrition

Eating well is an important part of having a healthy brain and mood. The teen years are an especially important time because your brain is still developing and will continue to do so until your mid-twenties. How you eat can affect your mood, behaviour, thinking patterns, and performance.

Good nutrition provides the nutrients your brain needs to make the natural chemicals (neurotransmitters) 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.

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



## 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.

## 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 your 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 have higher amounts of the nutrients your body needs to make neurotransmitters and to support growth and tissue repair. Many of these foods also provide the iron that carries oxygen through your body. Protein also helps you feel full for longer after meals.

## 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.



## What about supplements?

Healthy foods are the best source of vitamins, minerals, and omega-3 fats. Alberta Health Services recommends all teens take 400 IU of vitamin D supplements each day because it's hard to get enough of this nutrient from food and sunlight. There's not enough good 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.

## Enjoy unprocessed or minimally processed foods

Foods that are as close to their natural form (e.g., fresh or 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

Drinking enough fluid throughout the day is important for energy, memory, and focus. Dehydration can cause headaches and fatigue. You need 1800 to 2600 mL (7 to 10 cups) of fluid each day.

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 and interrupt your sleep.

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



Enjoy meals with your family and friends as often as you can. Meal times and snack breaks are a great way to connect with others and boost your mood.

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

Everyone has some stress in their life. Everyday expectations like preparing for a test or giving a presentation in class can make you feel stressed out. When you feel stressed, your body responds by activating its stress or fight-or-flight response. This is your body's emergency response system to help 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.

Practicing techniques like mindfulness can reduce everyday stress and ease symptoms of depression and anxiety.

When you have stress that goes on for long periods of time (e.g., many exams in a short period, parents who aren't getting along, conflict with friends) your body's emergency stress response may be on most of the time. This makes it even harder to shut it off and leads to chronic or long-term stress, which can affect almost every system in your body. This can make it harder for you to cope with stress, depression, and/or anxiety.

## 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, reducing the tension in your muscles, and releasing brain chemicals called endorphins, which help you feel good. You can activate your relaxation response by practicing relaxation techniques like calm breathing, mindfulness, or progressive muscle relaxation (PMR).

Relaxation techniques can help you manage stress and ease symptoms of depression and anxiety. Practicing them every day can help you:

- feel good about yourself
- find more balance between school, friends, family, activities, and other responsibilities
- 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 gentle yoga or stretching
- **Be creative.** Draw, dance, or build something
- **Make time for yourself.** Read or listen to music that relaxes you
- **Get outside.** Go to the park, sit by a stream, or near trees
- **Unplug.** Take breaks from social media and texting
- **Spend time others.** Work on an art activity, watch a comedy, walk, or do a puzzle



## Relaxation Techniques

There isn't one relaxation technique that works for everyone. For some people, practicing relaxation techniques might feel silly or awkward at first. Try a few different techniques to see what you're comfortable with and which ones work

best for you. Sometimes people fall asleep during relaxation activities.

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 4 in 4 out or 6 in 6 out)
5. While you breathe, try focusing on a positive emotion (e.g., calmness, appreciation, gratitude)
6. Practice this for 3 minutes to start—then slowly increase your time to 10-15 minutes

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

PMR involves focusing on different muscle groups, tightening those muscles, and then letting them relax. To begin the exercise:

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. As you're breathing in, focus your attention on a specific area, tense or tighten the muscle in that area as you inhale and hold the tension for a count of 10 or as long as you comfortably can. Start at your feet, then move to legs, buttocks, abdomen/chest/back, arms, shoulders/neck, face/head, and finally tense your entire body.
5. As you breathe out count to five and slowly release the muscle group.
6. Lie still for 5 minutes. When you're ready, open your eyes.

### Tips for tensing or tightening areas of your body:

- **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/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/Neck.** Pull your shoulders up to your ears, tighten your neck
- **Face/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, your face/head and pull your chin to your chest



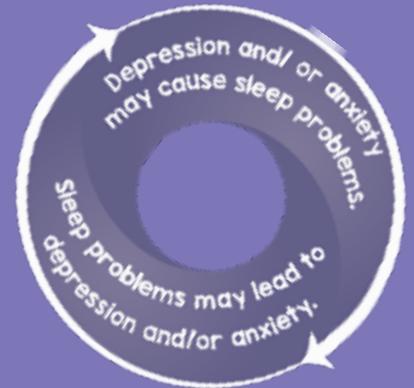
# Sleep

## Why is sleep important for your mental health?

Sleep helps your body restore, repair, and heal itself. Sleep improves your memory, immune system, and physical performance. It helps you solve problems better, manage your emotions better, and be more creative and flexible in your thinking. When you don't get enough sleep, you're not at your best in school or sports. You're also more likely to take part in risky situations, you can have trouble staying alert and you're more likely to gain weight.

## Understanding changes in your sleep patterns

During the teen years, your body's internal biological clock gradually changes to make you fall asleep later at night and wake up later in the morning. This change causes melatonin (the hormone that makes you feel like sleeping) to be produced later at night. This can make it hard for you to fall asleep and wake up. Adjusting to your new sleep pattern may make it challenging to get school on time and it can affect your family relationships.



## Other reasons for sleep pattern changes

Changes in your body's internal clock aren't the only reason your sleep patterns change. You can also lose sleep as a result of these common causes:

- **Insomnia** is when you have trouble falling or staying asleep. There are nights when it may be hard to fall asleep or stay asleep. This happens to most people from time to time and is usually triggered by a stressful event. But this pattern usually stops after a night or two.
- **Chronic insomnia** is when insomnia lasts for a month or longer. When this happens you don't get the amount of sleep you need to feel rested and refreshed. It can be caused by things like a medical condition, mental health problems, side effects of medication, ongoing stressful events (e.g., family conflicts, bullying, health problems), or substance use.
- **School and social demands** can interfere with your sleep. Homework, work, sports, extracurricular activities, family expectations, friends, and excessive time on social media may compete for your time and make it hard to get enough sleep.
- **Obstructive sleep apnea** causes you to temporarily stop breathing several hundred times during the night and deprives you of oxygen. These pauses in breathing briefly wake you up and disturb your sleep, even if you don't notice it while it's happening. One common cause of sleep apnea for teens is enlarged tonsils or adenoids. Being overweight can also put you at risk.



Are you over scheduled?  
Don't take on too much.  
Make time for fun, friends,  
and sleep. Ask family, teachers,  
and friends to help you find  
this balance.

## How much sleep do you need?

Between 9-10 hours of sleep are recommended for teens to be at your best. You might not always get this much sleep, but it's important to get as close to it as you can.

### Some common signs of a sleep problem

- daytime sleepiness, napping, and fatigue
- mood changes and feeling irritable
- problems paying attention
- problems with memory and school performance
- lack of motivation
- craving junk food or caffeine (e.g., coffee, tea, energy drinks, pop)
- taking longer than 30 minutes to fall asleep
- frequently going to sleep after midnight



### What you can do to sleep well

- Go to bed only when you're starting to feel sleepy.
- Be physically active everyday but avoid strenuous activities 3 hours before bedtime.
- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and at a cool but comfortable temperature.
- Only use your bed for sleeping and only fall asleep in your bed. Use a desk or some other space for homework. It's important to associate your bed with sleeping only.
- Avoid screens in your bedroom (e.g., no TV, tablets, smartphones). Darkness causes the production of melatonin; light stops it.
- Spend at least 30 minutes doing a quiet activity before getting into bed. Use this time for a warm bath or shower. Do some screen-free, relaxing activities like reading.
- If you're worried or thinking about what you have to do, write it down. Keep a paper and pen beside your bed. Discuss your worries with someone you trust.
- Avoid watching the clock at night, as it can increase your worry.
- Reduce your use of substances. Substances like tobacco products, caffeine, alcohol, or drugs can make falling and staying asleep more difficult.
- Try keeping a Sleep Diary to help you record, recognize, and improve your sleep patterns. (For more information go to page 16).

If you have any concerns about how long you're sleeping or you think your sleep is a problem, talk to your healthcare provider.

Too much screen time, especially before bed, can disrupt sleep. Poor sleep can make symptoms of depression and anxiety worse. Try to end your screen time at least one hour before bed to help you get good quality sleep.

## Sleep Diary Instructions

- For one week keep track of the time you go to sleep and wake up during the week.
- Get out of bed within 30 minutes of the same time every day, including weekends, no matter how long you have slept. If you sleep in on weekends to catch up on your sleep, it throws your body clock off even more. It will make it harder for you to fall asleep and wake up when the school week begins.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Fill in this portion of the chart every morning.</b>							
How did you get ready for bed? • Relaxation exercise? • Dimming the lights? • Calm music?							
How long did it take to fall asleep?							
Did you get up during the night? If yes, what did you do? How long were you awake?							
Quality of sleep?	good average poor						
How do you feel?							
<b>Total sleep hours</b>							
<b>Fill in this portion of the chart every evening.</b>							
At the end of your day how do you feel?							

# Thinking Strategies

## Tips for managing depression

### Keep a mood diary

- **Write it out.** 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.

You can use the mood diary on page 19 or create your own.

### Set small goals

- **Make a list.** You may be too overwhelmed to complete everyday tasks such as chores or homework. 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.** Start with small tasks and work your way up to harder ones. For example, you'll clean your room by Tuesday night and have your English paper completed by Sunday night. You can also manage bigger tasks by writing down smaller tasks that can be done in advance. To prepare for your paper, you may write down things like 'create an outline' or 'start research'.

### Challenge your thinking

- **Challenge your thoughts.** One of the best ways to change how you feel is to change the way you think. Try to challenge negative thoughts to feel more positive. Ask yourself questions like "Are there any facts that make this true?" or "Is there another way I can look at this situation?"
- **Keep a journal.** Write down any thoughts you have, especially any negative ones. In a separate column, write down a more helpful thought (e.g., instead of the original thought "I'll never get this job I want." try "There is a chance I might not get this job, but I have a lot of good skills. I will do my best."). Do this for a while to get the hang of changing negative thoughts into helpful ones.
- **Give yourself positive messages.** Write down positive messages for yourself that target your inner critic (e.g., "I got this.", "I am strong when I'm facing my fears."). Put them in your locker, textbooks, or room so you can look at them when you need to.

## Tips for managing anxiety

### Keep a mood diary

- **Write it out.** 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.

You can use the mood diary on page 20 or create your own.

### Challenge your thinking

- **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 it’ll happen? If it did, how would I handle it?”

Helpful thinking isn’t the same as positive thinking. Sometimes negative thoughts can be accurate (e.g., a stressful event will happen). Helpful thinking means giving yourself the message that you can handle a negative thing that might happen. It’s the kind of thinking that leaves you feeling hopeful.

### 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, the sights and sounds around you. If you have anxious thoughts while doing this, acknowledge them 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., sunny beach, a mountain, friend’s home). Use your senses when thinking about yourself there—What do you hear? Smell? See?

## Daily Mood Diary for Depression

	Mood	Intensity (1-10)	Situation	Thoughts	How long did you feel like this
<i>Examples</i>	happy	5	went sledding with friends.	felt nice to be outside, felt relaxed.	?
	depressed	4	at school, didn't sleep well last night, feeling hungry	Everyone seems to be so happy, what's wrong with me?	4-5 hours
<b>Sunday</b>					
<b>Monday</b>					
<b>Tuesday</b>					
<b>Wednesday</b>					
<b>Thursday</b>					
<b>Friday</b>					
<b>Saturday</b>					

## Daily Mood Diary for Anxiety

	Mood	Intensity (1-10)	Situation	Thoughts	How long did you feel like this
<i>Examples</i>	nervous	7	Was invited to hang out with someone I just met at school.	They'll probably think I'm too weird. What if I say something stupid or wrong?	
	anxiety	8	Taking selfies with friends.	How come my friends look so good in their pics, I always look awful. What if people make fun of me, what if I don't get any likes.	
<b>Sunday</b>					
<b>Monday</b>					
<b>Tuesday</b>					
<b>Wednesday</b>					
<b>Thursday</b>					
<b>Friday</b>					
<b>Saturday</b>					

## References

- Alberta Centre for Active Living, & Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation. (2011). What stops you from being physically active? Retrieved from [https://www.centre4activeliving.ca/media/filer\\_public/c5/2c/c52c4d03-b761-4f92-a521-fd03a20d7f41/d-barriers.pdf](https://www.centre4activeliving.ca/media/filer_public/c5/2c/c52c4d03-b761-4f92-a521-fd03a20d7f41/d-barriers.pdf)
- Alberta Health Services, National Center for PTSD, and National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2017). Helpful thinking during a stressful time handout. [Handout]
- Alberta Health Services. (2016). What to do if you are feeling suicidal. Retrieved from <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/youth-addiction-mental-health/suicide/what-to-do-if-you-feel-suicidal>
- Alberta Health Services. (2018). Evidence-based Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Resources.
- Alberta Health Services. (2018). Healthy eating starts here. Retrieved from <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page12598.aspx>
- Alberta Health Services. (2018). I want to: Get Help. Retrieved from <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/pipp/Page17167.aspx>
- Alberta Health Services. (2018). Preventing Suicide. Retrieved from <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/injprev/Page4875.aspx>
- AnxietyBC. (2009). What is Generalized Anxiety Disorder? Retrieved from <https://www.anxietybc.com/adults/generalized-anxiety-disorder>
- Beyondblue. (2018). Signs and symptoms of anxiety. Retrieved from <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety/signs-and-symptoms>
- Beyondblue. (2018). Signs and symptoms of depression. Retrieved from <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/depression/signs-and-symptoms>
- Camara, M., Bacigalupe, G., & Padilla, P. (2017). The role of social support in adolescents: are you helping me or stressing me out? *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 22(2), 123–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2013.875480>
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division. (2014). Mental Health: Anxiety disorders. Retrieved from <https://alberta.cmha.ca/document-category/mental-health/>
- Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division. (2013). Anxiety Disorders | Here to Help. Retrieved from <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/anxiety-disorders>
- Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division. (2013). Wellness Module 3: Social Support. Retrieved from <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-module/wellness-module-3-social-support>
- Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2016). Social Connections, Protective and promotion factors. Retrieved 22 June 2018, from [https://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive/2013/YT\\_Social-Connections.pdf](https://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive/2013/YT_Social-Connections.pdf)
- Centre for studies on human stress. (2017). What is stress when you are 12 or 14 years old. Retrieved from <http://humanstress.ca/stress-and-you/youth-and-stress/stress-at-12-or-14-years-old/>
- Conklin, A. I., Yao, C. A., Richardson, C. G. (2018). Chronic sleep deprivation and gender-specific risk of depression in adolescents: A prospective population-based study. *BMC Public Health*, 18 (724). Retrieved from: <https://doaj.org/article/d2384fdc0db2411a9635b7d7ce2ff5e1>
- Government of Alberta, Alberta Health. (2016). Physical activity – Active living: Alberta Health website. Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/physical-activity.html>
- Government of Alberta. (2017). Fact Sheet: Healthy Relationships. Retrieved from <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/healthy-relationships-fact-sheet.pdf>
- Government of Canada. (2012). Physical Activity Tips for Youth (12-17 years). Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/migration/phac-aspc/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pa-ap/assets/pdfs/06paap-eng.pdf>
- Harvard Health Publishing, & Harvard Medical School. (2016). Mindfulness: Not just for stress reduction. Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu>
- Harvard Medical School. (2013). Harvard Medical School Special Health Report, Stress Management: Approaches for preventing and reducing stress (p. 57). Harvard University.
- Henchoz, Y., Dupuis, M., Deline, S., Studer, J., Baggio, S., N'Goran, A. A., ... Gmel, G. (2014). Associations of physical activity and sport and exercise with at-risk substance use in young men: A longitudinal study. *Preventive Medicine*, 64, 27–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2014.03.022>
- Here to Help BC & Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division. (2011). Visions: Social support. *BC's Mental Health and Addictions Journal*, 6(4), 7–10.
- Hightower, E. (2017). An Exploratory Study of Personality Factors Related to Psychological Abuse and Gaslighting (Doctoral dissertation, William James College).
- Katz, D., Esser, T., Esser, S., & Vinante, V. (2016). ABE for Fitness. Retrieved from <http://abeforfitness.com/index.html>
- Kubiszewski, V., Fontaine, R., Rusch, E., Hazouard, E. (2014). Association between electronic media use and sleep habits: An eight day follow up study. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 19(3). Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02673843.2012.751039>
- MacDonald, A., Harvard Medical School. (2010). Using the relaxation response to reduce stress. Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/using-the-relaxation-response-to-reduce-stress-20101110780>
- Nemours Foundation & KidsHealth. (2014). Anxiety Disorders. Retrieved from <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/anxiety.html>
- Nemours Foundation & KidsHealth. (2017). Stress. Retrieved from <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/stress.html?view=ptr&WT.ac=t-ptr>

- Parent, J., Sanders, W., & Forehand, R. (2016). Youth Screen time and behavioural health problems: The role of sleep duration and disturbances. *Journal of Developmental Behavioural Pediatrics, 37*, 277-284. Retrieved from: <https://oac.ovid-com.ahs.idm.oclc.org/article/00004703-201605000-00003/HTML>
- ParticipAction Canada. (2016). Benefits & Guidelines - Youth 5-17. Retrieved from <https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/thought-leadership/benefits-and-guidelines/5-17>
- Pejakovic, I. (n.d.). Social Support Helps Teens Achieve Goals. Retrieved from <http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/social-support-helps-teens-achieve-goals>
- Roberts, R.E., & Duong, H.T. (2014). The prospective association between sleep deprivation and depression among adolescents. *Sleep, 37* (2), 239-244. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3900610/>
- Robinson, L., & Segal, J. (2016). Mood-Boosting Power of Dogs: How Caring for a Dog Helps You Cope with Depression, Anxiety, and Stress. Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/mood-boosting-power-of-dogs.htm>
- Robinson, L., Segal, R., Segal, J., & Smith, M. (2016). Relaxation Techniques: Using the Relaxation Response to Relieve Stress. Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm>
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. (2015, March). RACGP - Internet based or computerized CBT for depression and anxiety. Retrieved from <https://www.racgp.org.au/download/Documents/HANDI/handicbt.pdf>
- Schwartz, S., & Department of Developmental Services. (2010). Social Support Systems and Maintaining Mental Health. Retrieved from <http://www.ddssafety.net/sites/default/files/attachments/10-06-11/FASocialSupportSystem.pdf>
- Smith, M., Robinson, L., & Segal, J. (2018). A Teenager's Guide to Depression: Tips and Tools for Helping Yourself or a Friend. Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/teenagers-guide-to-depression.htm>
- Squeglia, L. M., Jacobus, J., & Tapert, S. F. (2009). The Influence of Substance Use on Adolescent Brain Development. *Clinical EEG and Neuroscience : Official Journal of the EEG and Clinical Neuroscience Society (ENCS), 40*(1), 31–38.
- Tremblay, M. S., Carson, V., Chaput, J.-P., Connor Gorber, S., Dinh, T., Duggan, M., ... Zehr, L. (2016). Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth: An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism, 41*(6 (Suppl. 3)), S311–S327. <https://doi.org/10.1139/apnm-2016-0151>
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Adolescent Health. (2018). Healthy Friendships in Adolescence. Retrieved 22 June 2018, from <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/healthy-relationships/healthy-friendships/index.html>
- Wang, D., Wang, Y., Wang, Y., Li, R., & Zhou, C. (2014). Impact of Physical Exercise on Substance Use Disorders: A Meta-Analysis. *PLoS ONE, 9*(10). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0110728>
- Winters, K. C., & Arria, A. (2011). Adolescent Brain Development and Drugs. *The Prevention Researcher, 18*(2), 21–24.
- Zschucke, E., Heinz, A., & Ströhle, A. (2012). Exercise and Physical Activity in the Therapy of Substance Use Disorders. *The Scientific World Journal, 2012*. <https://doi.org/10.1100/2012/901741>

Your opinion matters. To tell us what you think of this resource go to:  
<https://survey.albertahealthservices.ca/TeenSelfManagement>

To order copies of this resource go to:  
<https://dol.datacm.com/>  
Login ID: mentalhealthresources  
Password: mh2016  
Item#: SM002



LIFE  
IS FOR  
LIVING