

Adolescent Depression

Clinical depression is much more than feeling sad for a while. 5-10% of Canadian youth will experience an episode of clinical depression and, in the worst cases, this leads to suicide (the #1 cause of non-accidental death among youth). Contributing factors to onset of clinical depression include: family history, personality, life events, & physical changes, illness, or medications. Only 25% of Canadian youth report receiving appropriate treatment.

Symptoms

These experiences are common for adolescents with depression (with individual differences):

Feelings Change

Suddenly, the youth is more unhappy, worried, angry, fearful, helpless, lonely, etc.

Physical Health Changes

Examples are headaches, unexplained pains, fatigue, changed eating/sleeping, or weight changes

Changes in Thinking

Saying things that indicate low self-esteem, difficulty concentrating, suicidal thoughts

Behavior Changes

Suddenly more withdrawn, uninterested, crying easily, or over-reacting

Some youth with mental health issues may self-harm, and will often hide that behaviour. They may feel embarrassed or ashamed, and they may avoid talking about it. Warning signs of self-harm include:

- Unexplained frequent injuries, such as cuts and bruises or unexplained scars
- Wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts all the time, even in warm weather
- Low self-esteem, problems handling emotions, or problems with relationships

Treatment Works!

Psychotherapy – reduces the duration & severity of clinical depression

Self-care strategies – such as eating well, exercising, positive social interactions, & having fun

Medication – when the anxiety is severe or difficult to treat by the above methods

Talk! – Build awareness & have important conversations about anxiety & psychological health

Resources -- Right by You Campaign – Tools for parents <http://rightbyyou.ca/en/resources>

Canadian Mental Health Association – Youth & Self-Injury http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/youth-and-self-injury/#.WVUeAojyu70

References -- National Institute of Mental Health (2017). Child and Adolescent Mental Health. Online.

Right By You (2017). Bringing Canadians together to better support teen mental health. Online.

Canadian Mental Health Association (2016). Youth. Online.