

What is cancer-related depression?

Depression is when feelings of sadness are strong and will not go away for weeks or months. It causes other physical and emotional symptoms too. Depression affects your quality of life and can lead to thoughts of suicide.

What are the symptoms of depression?

- Physical symptoms → low energy; feeling sluggish or restless and agitated; sleeping and eating more or less than before
- Emotional/mental symptoms → feeling hopeless or worthless; not enjoying things you used to enjoy; feelings of guilt or regret; wanting to die; worsened anxiety
- People with cancer who have depression may want to stop treatment, worry a lot about cancer returning, focus on bad outcomes or not look after their health

If you are thinking about suicide or harming yourself call 911 or go to your nearest Emergency Department right away.

What can I do to help my depression?

1. Find support

Support from family, friends and your community can make you feel better and less alone.

These tips can help you get support:

- Talk to someone you trust who is a good listener
- Talk to someone at your place of worship
- Join a cancer support program to share stories with other people
- Talk to a social worker about support programs at your cancer centre

At Walker Family Cancer Centre, Call 905-682-6451 and Press 2 to book an appointment with a social worker.

2. Focus on things that make you feel better

Focus on the positive parts of your life and things you can control.

- Feel grateful for the things and people that bring you joy
- Spend time with people who make you laugh
- Try to avoid negative people and things that cause you stress
- Avoid or limit alcohol as it can lower your mood

3. Eat well

A balanced diet can help you feel more energetic and positive.

These tips can help you eat well:

- Eat something every 3 to 4 hours. You need fuel often to keep your mind and body working at their best
- Keep healthy snacks on hand like nuts, fruit, vegetables and yogurt
- Eat foods rich in omega 3 fatty acids like, fish, flax seeds and walnuts. These foods can help improve your mood

4. Exercise and take care of your body

Exercise is a good way to improve your mood. It makes endorphins, which are chemicals in your body that are natural pain killers and mood boosters.

Try these tips when exercising:

- Choose an activity you like that suits your health and fitness level
- Start slowly with light exercise like walking, swimming or yoga
- Go at your own pace. Slowly increase the amount and difficulty of your exercise

5. Improve your sleep

Getting good sleep can help to give you more energy and feel better emotionally.

These tips can help you improve your sleep:

- Set a time for planning and worrying in the early evening so you do not think about these things when you are trying to fall asleep
- Do relaxing activities like reading or listening to music before going to bed
- If you do not fall asleep after 20-30 minutes, get out of bed. Only go back to bed when you feel like you may be able to fall asleep

6. Make lists of calming, enjoyable and useful activities

When you feel sad or down, get your list and choose an activity.

Include:

- Things you enjoy, like going for a walk, watching your favourite TV shows, or taking a bath
- Things you need to do, like chores and appointments