

Healthy Lifestyle Information



Healthy Eating

People living with depression may find it hard to eat healthy. Some may not have an appetite, while others may overeat or eat unhealthy food choices. The following is a list of tips on eating healthy during difficult times.

Eat regular meals.

Create a routine to make eating regularly easy. Try to have three set meal times and two set snack times per day.

Eat by the clock, not by your stomach.

Eat during the set meal and snack times to avoid over and under eating. If you've lost your appetite, push yourself to eat anyway. A small meal is better than nothing. If you've been overeating, try to only eat at meal or snack times and make a rule to only eat at the table.

Make it easy.

Choose foods that are easy and quick to prepare. Right now, eating is more important than cooking. Check the labels though, as ready-to-serve foods often have less nutritional value.

Refer to EatRight Ontario for suggestions and support.

Visit: www.eatrightontario.ca or speak with an EatRight Ontario nutritionist, by calling 1-877-510-5102 to get easy-to-use nutrition information to help you make healthier food choices.

Make extra.

Save time by making larger amounts. Freeze the extra for another day.

Make it healthy.

Plan nutritious meals and snacks before you go shopping and only shop for items on your list.

Avoid too much sugar.

Choose complex carbohydrates like whole grain products, brown rice and potatoes over processed foods.

Avoid dieting.

Eat healthy and be more physically active if you want to lose weight. Strict diets often lack the nutrients you need. Check with a physician or nurse practitioner before you try to lose weight.

Eat well with Canada's Food Guide.

Use these guidelines to show you what an average adult needs to eat in one day.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php. Your age, body size and how active you are make a difference. And during pregnancy and breastfeeding you'll need 2-3 extra servings of food.



Active Living

Getting regular exercise isn't just good for your physical health, it is also good for your mental health. Regular exercise can reduce your chances of getting depressed as well as reduce the symptoms of depression for all people, including women who are pregnant or who just had a baby.

Here are some facts about exercise and mood:

- Mood tends to improve after a few weeks of regular exercise (three to four times a week, at least 20 minutes at a time).
- Energy improves as the body gets more physically fit.
- Physical activity helps burn off stress.
- Some people get a brief “runner’s high” just after exercising.
(But this may not happen during depression.)

Now, here are some tips for developing an exercise program:

Check with your doctor or service provider before starting an exercise program.

They can tell you if you should avoid any activities. This is very important if you are pregnant or if you recently had a Caesarian section.

Pick the right activities.

Choose exercise activities that you enjoy so that you are more likely to continue doing them. Variety is important so that you don't have to do the same thing every time.

Warm up first and stretch during and after exercising.

Perform gentle stretching exercises during and after each exercise session to help to reduce the risk of pain or injury.

Exercise regularly rather than exercising for a long time.

Aim to exercise briefly three or four times a week. It's better than exercising for longer amounts of time whenever you feel like it.

Focus on enjoyment.

You'll have a better chance of improving your mood if you enjoy the exercise. It's good to feel challenged, too. Try to focus on how you will feel-not how you want to look.

Set a goal you can achieve.

You'll have a greater sense of accomplishment. For example, aim to swim 3 times a week for five minutes when you're starting out, rather than aiming for 70 laps a day.

If you have been diagnosed with bi-polar (manic depressive) mood problems:

Strenuous exercise during a manic phase may make the problem worse for some people. Gentler exercise may be better at these times.

These tips are based on the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines that you'll find at this website: www.csep.ca/guidelines



Sleep

Stress, anxiety and depression often disrupt sleep. But disrupted sleep can lead to even more anxiety and depression. In other words, sleep difficulties are a cause and an effect of mood problems.

During late pregnancy, when you can't get comfortable in bed, it can be hard to sleep. And right after the baby is born, broken sleep is very common. To help improve your mood, try to get at least five hours of uninterrupted sleep a few nights each week.

Tips for better sleep

Create a good sleep environment.

The best bedroom temperature for most people to sleep is 18° to 21° (65°F to 70°F). If noise is a problem, ask your spouse or family member to keep the baby monitor, to give you a few uninterrupted hours of sleep. They can help settle or feed the baby once during the night. To reduce the noise you can also try the following:

- Use earplugs.
- Soundproof the room (cloth hangings can help a bit).
- Use devices that emit white noise (e.g., fans or special noise machines).
- Remove hourly watch beepers or clocks that chime.

Note: Sometimes mothers are advised to consider formula supplementation or formula feeding to reduce fatigue. Research shows that mothers are equally tired, regardless of how they feed their babies.

Your bedroom should be the place where you can retreat and relax.

Leave your cell phone outside of the bedroom and watch TV in another room. The same goes for eating, exercising and so on.

Prepare for sleep.

Ease into it gradually. Plan to avoid housework, heavy meals and bright light (e.g., computers or TV) for at least an hour before bed. Your routine might involve reading while you enjoy a warm drink, or having a bath.

Set a schedule.

Regular hours for going to bed and getting up can help to set your internal clock. When you go to bed and get up at different times, this clock gets disrupted. For example, jet lag is caused by disrupted sleep times, not the travel.

Try relaxation or distraction.

A relaxation CD or mental exercise can take your mind away from your worries. That's why some people "count sheep"! Here's a sample relaxation audio you might like to try:

www.comh.ca/pchc/resources/audio/index.cfm.

If you wake up, get up.

If you wake up and can't fall back asleep within 20 minutes or so, get out of bed. Go to another room and read or do other quiet activities until you feel sleepy. If you have to feed the baby, keep the lighting low. If you can't get back to sleep, have a milky drink or read. Using relaxation breathing or guided relaxation (noted on page 46) can also help.

Good news: breastfeeding hormones generally help you get to sleep faster.

Avoid too much caffeine.

A cup of coffee can help you to get going in the morning. It can also perk you up when your energy is lagging. Later in the day, too much caffeine may disrupt your sleep cycle. Caffeine-free beverages are a better choice after 1:00pm in the afternoon. *The next page contains additional information about caffeine.*

When baby naps, it's time for your nap, too!

Try to nap at least once during the day while your baby is sleeping. If you can't sleep during the day, take a break to rest or lie down. Even a rest break can give you more energy.

If these suggestions don't help: ask your doctor or service provider for advice.



Caffeine

Cutting back on caffeine can help to manage depression. This is because caffeine changes how the body responds to stress. You may feel less anxious if you cut back on how much caffeine you're getting. Caffeine can also make some conditions worse. These include tension headache, irritable bowel syndrome and chronic pain.

Caffeine is an addictive drug.

It takes about three and one-half cups (450 milligrams per day) to become addicted. Some people might get addicted with less.

Are you addicted to coffee?

You probably are addicted if you:

- Develop cravings for a cup of coffee.
- Seem to need more caffeine to get the same effect.
- Get a splitting headache if you don't get any coffee for a couple of days or so.
- Get other symptoms such as drowsiness, feeling irritable, or having trouble concentrating.

Tips to lower caffeine intake:

- Avoid withdrawal symptoms by reducing intake slowly.
- Drop your intake by about half for 4-6 days.
- Drop it again by half for the next 4-6 days.
- Drop it by half again until you are drinking no more than 2 cups per day.

You can use the table below to calculate how much caffeine you are getting every day: Notice the small serving sizes. Your coffee cup may hold three or four of these!

SUBSTANCE	AMOUNT IN MG	# PER DAY	TOTAL
<i>Coffee</i>			
Drip (5 oz.)	130	X	=
Espresso drinks (1 shot)	90	X	=
Instant freeze-dried (5 oz.)	70	X	=
Decaffeinated (5 oz.)	3	X	=
<i>Tea</i>			
5-minute steep (5 oz.)	60	X	=
3-minute steep (5 oz.)	30	X	=
<i>Other</i>			
Red Bull (8.5 oz.)	80	X	=
Small chocolate bar	25	X	=
Regular or diet cola	12	X	=
Hot cocoa (5 oz.)	10	X	=



Drugs and Alcohol

People who are living with depression want to feel better. That's why some will use recreational drugs or alcohol. Even if they get some relief from their alcohol or drug use, it is only short-term.

In the long run, drugs and alcohol can make depression worse because:

- You avoid problems; you don't solve them.
- Drugs and alcohol affect how you work, play, or get along with others.
- You can become dependent on them.
- You risk damaging your physical health.

If you're living with depression:

- Alcohol and drug use may seem tempting.
- Tolerance for the effects of alcohol and drugs may be lower than usual.
- You may not be as able to control your use.
- Drugs and alcohol can interact with some prescription medications.

Drinking alcohol is not safe when you could be pregnant or if you are pregnant. Alcohol is not recommended when you are breastfeeding.

What you can do to work towards a healthier lifestyle by stopping or reducing drug and alcohol use:

- First, examine the problem.
- Then, set goals.
- Finally, work on the problems, one step at a time.

Tips for setting goals:

- Not using works for some people but reducing intake is better than giving up.
- A personal policy of using substances in moderation makes sense for anyone.
- It helps to remember that many people have addiction problems.

If you're living with depression, it's best to avoid alcohol and recreational drugs completely. This is especially true if you have a personal or family history of substance misuse.

If your use of drugs or alcohol is altogether out of your control, remember that:

- Many people have had this problem.
- Many organizations can help you to regain control.
- Help and information is available.