



Almost everyone feels sad or “depressed” at certain times. At least five symptoms for at least two weeks are required for a diagnosis of clinical depression (also called major depressive disorder or MDD), which is a more severe condition.



- Feelings of sadness, worthlessness, hopelessness
- Increased self-criticism, shame, or guilt
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in sleep
- Changes in sexual desire
- Difficulties in concentration
- Decrease in activities or social withdrawal
- Thoughts of, or plans related to, self-harm or suicide

Some athletes also experience increased irritability or aggression, anxious or pessimistic thoughts (e.g., focusing on worst-case scenarios), and negative impacts on performance. Watch for signs of mania (the opposite of depression), including a significantly elevated mood, increased activity or risk-taking, no need for sleep, or inflated self-esteem, which can follow periods of depression and may reflect other mental health conditions like bipolar disorder (BPD).

PREVALENCE

Approximately 1% of Canadian men and 2% of Canadian women are clinically depressed at any point in time, and about 5% of men and 10% of women will experience clinical depression at some point in their life. Depression and suicidality are much more common among 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, Black people, Indigenous people, and other minorities with different studies showing rates anywhere from 30-60%. Rates of depression and depressive symptoms among athletes vary, with some evidence that as many as 25% of athletes experience at least mild to moderate depressive symptoms.



MAKE DEPRESSION MORE LIKELY

- Family history of depression
- Environmental factors (e.g., lack of support)
- Injury, pain, or concussion
- Loss or failure
- Retirement from sport
- Sleep deprivation
- Malnourishment

MAKE DEPRESSION LESS LIKELY

- Productive coping (e.g., active problem solving, relaxation, physical activity)
- Support from loved ones
- Self-acceptance
- Optimism

High-performance athletes also describe feelings of autonomy, positive relationships within and outside of sport, and adequate recovery as making depression less likely.

TREATMENT STRATEGIES

If you believe you or someone you know are experiencing depression, consider exploring the many safe and effective treatment options. Consult with a mental health provider or physician to learn more.

- **Therapy:** Therapy can help you learn to recognize and change negative thought patterns, increase desired activities and decrease avoidance or withdrawal, improve relationships, and reconnect with your goals and values.
- **Pharmacological treatments:** There are a variety of effective antidepressants. Consult with a physician if you would like to explore this. Remember: some medications may require a therapeutic use exemption (TUE) for training and competition.





TIPS FOR MANAGING DEPRESSION

“Activation Before Motivation”: Many people who are depressed believe that they need to feel good before they can start doing things that interest them. Start by getting active with your mind, body or spirit, and motivation will often follow!

Don’t Believe Everything You Think: When you’re depressed, your brain tends to focus on what’s negative and ignore what’s true. If you notice a stream of self-critical thoughts, reminding yourself, “My depressed brain is telling me this, but that doesn’t necessarily make it true,” can help you see things more accurately.



Do Something for Future You: What could you do today that the Future You would appreciate? Whether training, spending time with family and friends, taking care of your body with proper nutrition and recovery, or problem-solving the things causing you stress, do something kind for Future You.

CONTACT YOUR COPSIN GAME PLAN ADVISOR OR MENTAL HEALTH LEAD FOR MORE INFORMATION ON DEPRESSION AND TO GET CONNECTED TO THE RIGHT RESOURCES.