

## Teenage Depression: Separating Myth from Reality

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Adolescence is a challenging time. Dealing with physical, emotional, and hormonal changes while trying to balance school, work, friends and family can be stressful for anyone. Now take all these daily pressures and combine them with feelings of sadness, irritability, low energy and motivation, poor concentration, sleep disturbance (too much or too little), change in appetite and even thoughts of death.

Mental illness such as depression often goes unnoticed in teens, and is sometimes dismissed as typical teenage moodiness. The truth of the matter is that it is a condition that can have serious effects on the lives of those suffering from it. Here are some common myths about teenage depression.

**Myth #1: The majority of adolescents will go through at least one significant period of depression in their lifetime.**

**Reality:** Depression does not affect the majority of teenagers. Only about 1 in 10 people will face an episode of clinical depression during their high school years.

**Myth #2: Depression will usually lift spontaneously in two to three months.**

**Reality:** While depression *can* lift spontaneously, it can take up to two years for this to happen. Teens who do not receive the appropriate treatment will suffer with the illness for an extended period of time, and evidence shows roughly 60 per cent of youth with depression will experience another episode of depression either as a teen or as an adult.

**Myth #3: Getting adolescents to talk about their depression will worsen their condition.**

**Reality:** Talking with a teen about their depression should be encouraged. It has been proven to be one of the most effective treatments for the condition and in most cases, is even as effective as medication.

Education and acceptance of teen depression is critical. It is serious and should be treated like any other medical condition. Teens suffering from depression need a solid support network. Parents and mentors need to know that there are many resources available like social workers, family doctors, local hospitals, children's mental health centres, and support groups.

