

## Wellness Articles

Attached are weekly health and wellness articles provided by Alberta Health Services. As a way to help all Albertans live a healthy life, we welcome and encourage weekly newspapers, community newsletters and other publications to reproduce this information free of charge. Credit to Alberta Health Services or the identified content provider would be appreciated.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: [Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca). You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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## Understanding mental illness

Each year, more than 810,000 individuals in Alberta consult a physician for addiction and mental health services.

Mental health problems are health conditions that impair an individual's thinking, mood, and/or behaviour (or a combination of these). This impairment leads to distress and/or reduced functioning, such as trouble going to work, completing daily activities, and carrying on with usual relationships.

Although there are many types of mental health problems, the most common ones are depression and anxiety. Depression affects about 2 million Canadians 20 years of age and older at some point in their lives. Depression is often seen with other mental health problems and physical illnesses including heart disease, stroke, and physical disabilities. About 2.5 million Canadians 20 years of age and older live with an anxiety disorder. Schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression) are less common, but can have a huge effect on the quality of life of people living with these illnesses.

With support and treatment, people with mental illnesses can lead full, productive lives. Early intervention and support is vital. Research shows that half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14.

AHS provides mental health services to all Albertans, including children and youth, adults and seniors, as well as indigenous people, new immigrants and refugees.

Providing support to a family member or friend with a mental illness can be rewarding as well as stressful. It's important to also take care of yourself. For more information about how to take care of a loved one with a mental illness, please contact the 24/7 Mental Health Helpline at: 1-877-303-2642 (toll free within Alberta).



Should a crisis occur, there are a number of crisis services offered throughout the province, these include the following:

- 24/7 mental health helpline and 24/7 addictions helpline
- Crisis/Distress Lines:
  - Edmonton [780-482-4357](tel:780-482-4357) / [780-342-7777](tel:780-342-7777) (Mobile Response Team)
  - Calgary [403-266-1605](tel:403-266-1605) / [403-266-HELP](tel:403-266-HELP) (4357)
  - For other locations: <http://suicideprevention.ca/alberta-crisis-centres/>
  - Text: [Calgary Connect Teen](https://www.alberta.ca/calgary-connect-teen)
  - Online Chat Distress Centre: <http://www.distresscentre.com/>