


Is systematic screening for depression with questionnaires in primary care beneficial?

Depression has a negative effect on people’s emotions, thoughts and well-being.




Screening for depression in adults


The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care recommends against routine screening for depression using standardized tools, such as questionnaires with a cut off, in all adults aged 18+.



 **This guideline applies to adults at normal and higher risk of depression (e.g. childhood trauma, family history)**

 **Why?**

- The evidence shows that screening every adult for depression with a questionnaire has little or no effect on health

 **This guideline is not for adults with:**

- A history of depression
- Current depression
- Symptoms of depression or other mental health disorder

What does this mean for clinicians?


Ask patients about their mental health and well-being as part of usual care

Practice good clinical judgement to detect potential depression


Don’t use a standardized tool to screen every patient

Be vigilant for depression

Use clinical judgment to decide on further steps




Usual care vs. screening for depression




Usual care


- Asks about mental health and well-being regularly
- Conversation-based
- Questions asked in usual care are not screening



Screening


- Uses a medical test or tool (e.g. questionnaire with cut off score) to find people at risk of a disease or health problem
- Is done with every adult
- Is for people without symptoms





Depression facts


- Lifetime prevalence: 10% in people without bipolar disorders
- Depression has increased in Canadians aged 15 + since 2012
- People with childhood trauma, chronic disease, who are Indigenous, LGBTQ2+ or with substance use disorders at higher risk
- Depression is often diagnosed, managed, and treated in primary care



Takeaway:

- Be vigilant and ask about the mental health of patients regularly
- Don’t use a questionnaire with a cutoff score to detect depression
- Use all clinical information to make a mental health assessment

Mental health resources

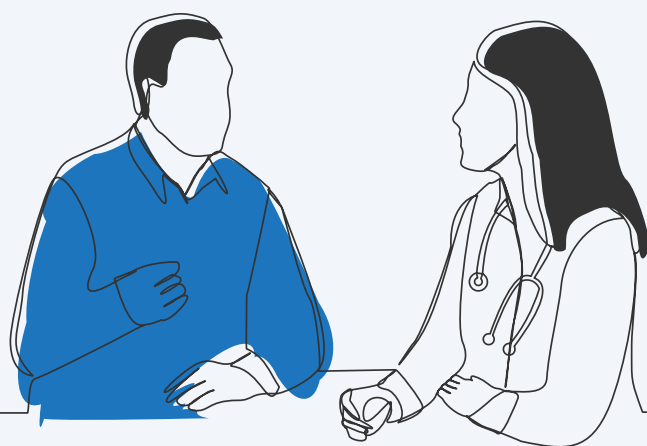
- [988 Suicide Crisis Helpline](#)
 - Canada.ca Mental health support: [Get help](#)
 - [Quebec mental health \(Santé mentale\)](#)
- 



Talking about mental health is important.

Depression has a negative effect on emotions, thoughts and well-being.

Depression is a medical illness. There is help.



Talk to a health care provider if you

- Feel sad
- No longer enjoy things
- Feel worthless
- Have trouble sleeping or lack energy
- Think about harming yourself

It can help to talk with a health care provider about:



- Your mood, mental health and well-being



Screening for depression in adults



What is screening?

- It uses a medical test or tool (like a questionnaire) to find people at risk of a disease or health problem
- Is for all people without symptoms



The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care recommends patients aged 18+ talk to their health care providers about depression rather than undergo routine screening with standard tools, like questionnaires.



Why?

- Studies show that a blanket approach to screening for depression in every adult has little or no benefit
- Individual conversations with your health care provider are better

This guideline is for adults at normal and higher risk of depression (e.g. childhood trauma, family history)



This guideline is not for adults with:

- A history of depression
- Current depression
- Symptoms of depression or other mental health disorder



Takeaway:

- Talk about your feelings or ask for help
- If you have symptoms or have been diagnosed with depression, a healthcare provider can talk with you about help and treatment

Find help

- [988 Suicide Crisis Helpline](#)
- Canada.ca Mental health support: [Get help](#)
- [Quebec mental health](#) ([Santé mentale](#))

