

# Improving care for children and youth with depression using online tool

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CAMH has launched a new free online tool to help improve the standard of care for youth living with depression. The first-of-its-kind Cundill Centre Online Tool for the Treatment of Youth Depression summarizes

best care practices for supporting youth as they manage their depression, and is now available for primary care providers and other frontline clinicians everywhere.

Created by clinician scientists, [youth](#) and other experts from the Cundill Centre for Child and Youth Depression, the tool will also build capacity in primary care—including family doctors—which can help reduce waiting times for specialized care providers like CAMH, so that patients with the most urgent needs can be properly supported.

"The [COVID-19] pandemic has exposed chronic stresses and strains in the youth [mental health system](#), and as a result we've seen significant increases in youth [mental health issues](#), particularly depression," said Dr. Peter Szatmari, Director of Cundill Centre. "Depression is a very significant challenge, one of the most common mental health challenges that kids experience. The rates are going up and have very serious long-term consequences if it's not treated adequately."

Unfortunately, [health services](#) differ depending on the province you live in, or even what healthcare team you see. There is no standardized [treatment](#) for youth depression, so some patients receive best treatment practices, while others do not.

In order to help establish evidence-based standards of care, the Cundill Centre has been working for some time with health teams across the province to identify and share [best practices](#) with respect to screening, prevention, and treatment of child and youth depression. One such collaboration is with the Georgian Bay Family Health Team, a Collingwood-based team of interdisciplinary health care providers, as well as New Path Youth and Family Services, located in Barrie.

Dr. Karin Euler, family physician with the Georgian Bay Family Health Team, spoke about how this tool will directly benefit her team and their

patients. "All of us were just doing whatever we thought was the right thing to do, not based on any evidence. Children and youth were receiving different advice depending on who they saw. We weren't unified in our response to how we should manage depression. Children and youth deserve the best treatment possible, and the best treatment possible is based on evidence and good clinical practice guidelines."

The new Cundill Centre online tool is interactive and user friendly. It includes an overview of depression in youth, a section on assessment<sup>2</sup> along video simulating a virtual assessment<sup>2</sup> as well as links to assessment tools. The online tool also provides two treatment pathways: one for mild depression and one for moderate/severe depression, and concludes with a resource section with links to other practical tools, many developed by the Cundill Centre in collaboration with youth and service providers. The full content of the tool can be reviewed in under 20 minutes, and is freely available to primary care clinicians in all parts of Canada. The Cundill Centre will also launch the tool next month in the U.K. for international [health](#) care providers eager to use it.

"We wanted to curate the evidence, reduce the variability, and package it in a way that is accessible and useful to a wide range of stakeholders," added Dr. Szatmari. "I'm hoping that family doctors, school counselors, social workers, and pediatricians can use this tool to learn what's the best way to treat depression."

Zara Uddin, who served as a youth advisor on the online [tool](#), feels optimistic about how it will facilitate better care. She also had a message for her peers struggling with [depression](#): "[Young people should] reach out for help, especially from a physician or counselor. Depression can be highly treatable, and they can feel better. Sometimes, you just need to ask for help."

**More information:** Online tool: [cundilldepressioncaretool.camh.ca/](http://cundilldepressioncaretool.camh.ca/)

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