

# Youth Mental Health

## What is Mental Health?

- A health issue which can affect one's **thoughts, mood, or behaviour**, affecting the way in which one observes the world around them.
- As people, our mental health is affected on a daily basis through our ideas about the world, our interactions with others, and what happens to us as we go about our routine.
- Mental health challenges or illnesses occur when the thoughts, mood, or behaviour people are engaging in occur for an **extensive period of time beyond what is appropriate for the cause** of that event and cause trouble carrying out normal activities.

## Who are Youth?

- “Youth” generally refers to individuals at the stage of life from adolescence to early adulthood, or **between the ages of 15 to 29**. (Government of Canada, 2021)
- In 2021, there were around 7 million youth in Canada. (Government of Canada, 2021)



Chinese Canadian National Council  
Toronto Chapter



**Asians  
Against  
Racism  
and Hate**

# Signs of Mental Health Challenges

Below is are some signs of mental health challenges. This is a light and **incomplete list**.

We urge at risk individuals and concerned community members to **contact mental health trained experts to seek more information and/or help.**

- Unreasonable anger or irritability
- Poor concentration and memory, not being able to follow a conversation
- Increased or decreased sleep
- Increased or low appetite, or preoccupation with control over food, calories or excessive exercise
- Lack of motivation
- Withdrawing from people
- Avoiding friends and family
- Having frequent outbursts of anger



**Asians  
Against  
Racism  
and Hate**



Chinese Canadian National Council  
Toronto Chapter

**Ontario** 

# Some Causes of Mental Health Challenges

**Asians  
Against  
Racism  
and Hate**



Chinese Canadian National Council  
Toronto Chapter

**Ontario** 

## Genetic Factors



Certain genes or collection of genes are known to make people more susceptible to mental health challenges. A family member with a mental illness can increase the likelihood of experiencing a mental health challenge or illness, but just because a family member has a mental illness doesn't mean that others are certain to experience it as well.



## Substance and Alcohol Use

Use of substance and alcohol long-term or short-term can trigger an episode of psychosis or develop a dependency which can affect one's mental health.

## Early Life Environment

Unaddressed issues in childhood can complicate adulthood.



## Trauma and Stress

Traumatic life events and/or ongoing stress increases the risk of mental health challenges or illness.

# More than just a Diagnosis

Mental health illnesses are often diagnosed by medical professionals. However, many people experience mental health challenges or illnesses and never get diagnosed in their life.

**Social and cultural stigma around mental health prevents many people from seeking the help they need.** Sometimes this is because they may not have the language to communicate their experiences or fear the judgement they would receive when communicating it.

**By recognizing one's own mental health needs and diagnoses, they are able to access targeted supports that will improve their livelihood.**

**Approximately 1 in 5 (20%) children and youth in Ontario has a mental health challenge.** And of the mental health challenges experiences by Canadians, about 70% of mental health challenges have their onset in childhood or youth. (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2017).



Statistic Canada Community Health Survey highlights that **South Asians engaged in least amount of treatment seeking behaviours for depression** (Gadalla, 2010).

Following surveyed research on 36,984 Canadian individuals age 15 and older highlighted that **South Asians received treatment the least compared to White groups** (Gadalla, 2010).

**Asians  
Against  
Racism  
and Hate**



**Ontario** 

## Short Term vs. Long Term



**Not all mental health issues are created equal.**

Mental health concerns can be short-term or long-term and can occur across a spectrum of intensities.

Whether mild or intense, these concerns can vary from being a few weeks long to a life-long challenge that causes disability (Healthdirect Australia, 2023).

Some mental health concerns can be associated to events or interactions that occurred in a person's life.

**The intensity and longevity of the mental health issue can depend on a variety of factors** including the nature of the experience itself and the person's capacity to deal with the experience.

## The Impact of Environment on Mental Health

Mental health is impacted by the environmental factors and conditions that someone grows within. **Home life, diet, community connectivity, schooling, and the socio-political climate are a few of the ways that environment and mental health intersect.**

Youth are regularly influenced by their environment. The experiences they share with their family and friends, and the ones they observe influence how their perspective of the world and themselves.

In an open-ended questionnaire, **South Asian youth identified migration and culture crash between first generation parents and second generation youth as risk factors for mental health challenges** and further discussed stress, anxiety, and depression (Islam, 2012).

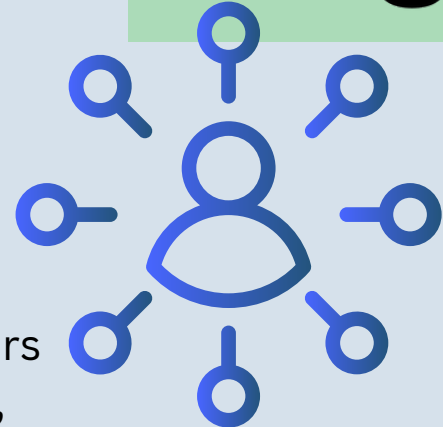
**Content warning: the next section will discuss death by suicide. Please skip the next slide if necessary**

## Asians Against Racism and Hate



Chinese Canadian National Council  
Toronto Chapter

Ontario 



# Youth Suicide - Asians, South Asians



Mental health issues can also lead to suicidal ideation and attempts. **Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 24 in Canada** (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2017).

**Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth and young adults (15-34 years)** (Statistics Canada, 2022).

**“Every year, approximately 446 young Canadians die by suicide”** (Youth Mental Health Canada, 2020).



**Youth mental health concerns need to be addressed early on to engage in preventative care and allow youth to live their lives to their fullest capacity.**



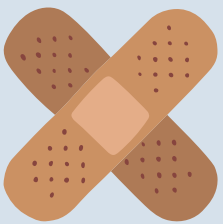
Chinese Canadian National Council  
Toronto Chapter

**Ontario** 

# Mental Health and Physical Health



Physical impairments, challenges, and health issues are often more visibly recognizable than mental health challenges. This means that it is important to understand the connection between mental and physical health.



A person's **mental health indicators can be largely physical** and there are many unhealthy physical behaviours that people can have when they do not care for their mental health.

It is important to **be aware of one's own and the surrounding signs of physical and mental health** so that collectively communities can help each other (Healthdirect Australia, 2023).

## Next Steps - Youth

Youth can engage in reflective exercises encouraging them to be present and identify their feelings.



- Can they determine what is affecting their thoughts, moods, and behaviours?
- Are those thoughts, moods, and behaviours healthy?
- What can be done to change those thoughts, moods, and behaviours?

**These questions are an exercise for youth to take notice of their own mental health and be aware that they don't have to go through challenges alone.** Talking about it with friends, family, or professionals is a great way to get more perspectives on the issue and determine a way forward towards better mental health.

# Next Steps - Adults

As adults are often working with and in service of youth, it is important to be open and hold space so that youth feel comfortable discussing their mental health concerns. Mental health challenges are not something that just go away on their own. Action is needed. Here's a list of actions that can be taken to address youth mental health:

- Be observant
  - Notice changes in thoughts, moods, and behaviours of youth and see if there are reasonable explanations for the changes
- Talk about it with youth
  - Create safe spaces to welcome tough conversations
  - Allow for the connection to other resources and allies if you are not the best person to speak to
  - Check in regularly and in a meaningful way
- Forcing someone to speak about their experiences is not the answer
  - This can cause even more distance and further challenge the relationship
- Engaging in activities the youth enjoy
- Supporting them in seeking professional help

A study in the Peel Region on mental health care of South Asians expressed that **youth and parents are distrusting towards Western psychiatry and use of drugs to manage mental health challenges.**

- For example: South Youth believed that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) was too individualistic in behavioural change and goal setting, ignoring their interdependent family life.
- Culturally Adapted CBT, a culturally appropriate and tailored approach to address mental health challenges was created to address this gap.

**Asians  
Against  
Racism  
and Hate**



Chinese Canadian National Council  
Toronto Chapter

**Ontario** 



# Mental Health Resources

- **Access Alliance:** [www.accessalliance.ca](http://www.accessalliance.ca)
- **Across Boundaries:** [www.acrossboundaries.ca](http://www.acrossboundaries.ca)
- **Kids Help Phone:** Call: 1-800-668-6868
- **Wellness Together Canada:**  
[www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA](http://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA)
- **Good2Talk:** Call: 1-866-925-5454
- **Mental Health Helpline:** Call: 1-866-531-2600
- **Canadian Mental Health Association:**  
<https://cmha.ca/>
- **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health:**  
[www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)
- **Youth Mental Health Canada:** <https://ymhc.ngo/>
- **Asians Do Therapy @asiansdotherapy** An organization dedicated to reducing stigma and increase access to therapy for AAPIs started by licensed therapist Yin J. Li. The site highlights how to navigate getting started finding a therapist, resources as well as sharing the stories of others in therapy.
- **Inclusive Therapists: @inclusivetherapists** A social justice movement and directory founded to expand mental and behavioral health care to all communities, founded by licensed therapist Melody Li. People interested can search for a therapist by insurance, specialties, identity and more.
- **Asian Mental Health Collective @asianmentalhealthcollective** The organization helps raise awareness about mental health care, contains a list of Asian therapists both in the U.S. and in Canada and an organization directory.

## Asians Against Racism and Hate



Chinese Canadian National Council  
Toronto Chapter

Ontario 

# Mental Health Resources Cont.

- **Chimo Service** [@chimoservices](#) Offers adult crisis and suicide intervention counselling and parent education series; service offered in Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Tagalog, Japanese and Korean
- **SUCCESS Chinese Helpline:** Provides support to Chinese Canadians who experience difficulties due to language and cultural barriers, and fear of social stigma. while demonstrating cultural sensitivity towards diverse values and beliefs. Cantonese Helpline 604-270-8233 Mandarin HelpLine 604-270-8222
- **Hong Fook Mental Health Association:** [@hongfookmha](#) The leading ethnocultural community mental health agency with a consolidated culturally competent team in Ontario serving the Asian communities. Hong Fook provides a continuum of services ranging from treatment of illness to promotion of wellness in the Cambodian, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Korean, and Vietnamese communities.

## Asians Against Racism and Hate



Chinese Canadian National Council  
Toronto Chapter

Ontario 

# Works Cited

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2023, March 7). CAMH shares new evidence-based tools and training to support mental health of Canadians of South Asian origin. Retrieved from <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/camh-shares-new-evidence-based-tools-and-training-to-support-mental-health-of-canadians-of-south-asian-origin-840302473.html>

Canadian Mental Health Association. (2017). Child and Youth Mental Health: Signs and Symptoms. Cmha.ca. <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/child-and-youth-mental-health-signs-and-symptoms/>

desLibris. (2019). A Portrait of Canadian Youth, Statistics Canada. Ottawa, ON, CA. Retrieved from <https://canadacommons.ca/artifacts/1419428/a-portrait-of-canadian-youth/2033476/>

Government of Canada. (2021). Canada's First State of the Youth Report: For Youth, with Youth, by Youth. <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/state-youth.html>

Gudala, C. M. (2019). Ethnicity and seeking treatment for depression: a Canadian national study. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 41(3), 233-245.

Islam, F., Qasim, S., Ali, M., Hynie, M., Shakya, Y., & McKenzie, K. (2022). South Asian youth mental health in Peel Region, Canada: Service provider perspectives. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 13634615221119384.

Healthdirect Australia. (2023, February 19). Mental illness. [www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au). [https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-illness#:~:text=mood%20disorders%20\(such%20as%20depression](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-illness#:~:text=mood%20disorders%20(such%20as%20depression)

Thobani, T. R., & Butt, Z. A. (2022). The Increasing Vulnerability of South Asians in Canada during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(5), 2786. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19052786>

Statistics Canada. Canadian Vital Statistics - Death Database. 2017-2019. Released in January, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/suicide-canada-key-statistics-infographic.html>

Youth Mental Health Canada. (2021). Impact Report. [https://ymhc.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Impact-Report-2021-Complete-Ver.20220129\\_compressed.pdf](https://ymhc.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Impact-Report-2021-Complete-Ver.20220129_compressed.pdf)

## Asians Against Racism and Hate



Ontario 