

# Youth Wellness Quest Guide

Finding the right supports for you



camh



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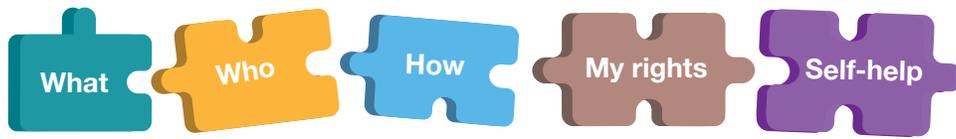
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# Getting help for mental health or substance use challenges

If you're having mental health or substance use challenges, getting help is often the first step toward getting and staying well. But it can be hard to know where to start. Sometimes all you know is that you need help.

You might want to get help if you're:

- worrying more than usual
- finding it hard to enjoy your life
- having thoughts and feelings that are hard to cope with and that affect your day-to-day life
- using substances more than usual
- interested in finding more support.

The Youth Wellness Quest Checklist and Guide will list the kinds of mental health services that may be available in your community so you can figure out what kind of help might be best for you.

You can start by looking through this Youth Wellness Quest Guide, and then fill out the **checklist**. You can then tell a health care provider the types of support and services you are looking for so they can help connect you with these services in your community. You can also use the checklist to figure out what services are most important to you. Then you can search online for services like these that are available near you, and give them a call.

For more information, **click here** to see the full version of the Youth Wellness Quest guide, or go to **[www.youthwellnessquest.ca](http://www.youthwellnessquest.ca)**.





## What services interest me?

### Help only when I need it (e.g. walk-in counselling, drop-in counselling)

This is a service where you can just drop in during certain hours to see a counsellor. It is a great option for people who want support from a professional, but who don't really want to talk to someone on a regular basis. It allows you to get help quickly and only when you need it.

Note: With walk-in counselling, you may not always see the same person.

### Regularly scheduled appointments (outpatient programs)

Regularly scheduled appointments means that you have a service provider who you see on a regular basis. For example, you might see a counsellor once every week.

### Services offered daily (day treatment)

Day treatment programs are more structured services that you go to during the day. For example, it could be a school program with treatment built into it where you would be with other young people who are going through similar experiences as you. Day treatment might interest you if you need more intensive mental health and/or substance use support. It can also give you the option to complete school credits while getting help. You might be able to move on to less structured support later.

### Help for mental health emergencies (crisis support)

A crisis is any situation in which a person's feelings or behaviours can lead to them hurting themselves or others, and/or being unable to care for themselves. Some examples of what this may look like are:

- having plans to self-harm or having self-harmed
- considering self-harming or having plans to die by suicide
- having made an attempt to die by suicide
- hearing voices that others cannot hear, seeing things that others cannot see, having a hard time knowing what's real and what's not
- experiencing serious side-effects from using alcohol or other drugs (e.g., excessive vomiting, seizures, trouble breathing, unresponsiveness).

Sometimes you might need to talk to someone **right away**. Crisis support is usually a short-term service to use during a crisis or distressing event. Crisis support can be in person, over the phone, through text or on a computer chat.

#### When in a crisis

If you're feeling like you can't keep yourself or people around you safe, call your local distress centre or **crisis line**. (Using Google, search for the name of your town and "mental health crisis", and use the number that shows up.)

**You can also go to the nearest emergency department or call 911.**

QUICK TIP: It's a good idea for everyone to know a number to call in a crisis. Write it down or **put it in your phone** so you can find it easily if you ever want it. One example is the **Kids Help Phone, 1 800 668-6868**.

**Click here for more information about getting help in a mental health emergency** or go to [camh.ca/gethelp](http://camh.ca/gethelp).



## Living at the place where you will get help (inpatient or residential programs)

You may need residential care if you are not able to cope with your symptoms at home and you need more support. This involves a higher level of support for people to feel safe, manage their symptoms and receive treatment. They can then get help to go back to living in the community.

You might also be interested in finding out about specific supports for other experiences. There are often specific services for youth with disabilities, 2SLGBTQA+, Indigenous, Black, newcomer youth and youth from various cultural, religious and spiritual backgrounds. You may also find sexual health services, support for youth who have experienced sexual assault, as well as employment services, legal and financial services, and pregnancy and parenting support.

## What I want the service to offer

### Types of services

- **One-on-one counselling** means face-to-face sessions with a service provider.
- **Group counselling** is a form of counselling in which a small group of people struggling with similar challenges meet with a counsellor.
- **Peer support** involves support from other youth who have experienced similar challenges and are around your age. Peer support workers have training in how to support other young people.
- **Support for my family** includes education, learning skills to support you through treatment, and help for family members to feel supported themselves.
- **Online or virtual options** for mental health and substance use treatment and support are available through text, online chat and phone. Ask the service agency how they offer their services. For many youth, the biggest concern with online support is privacy. You can try to make it more private by finding a quiet and safe space, wearing headphones or moving to a more private space (e.g., going for a walk outside).

There are many **types of therapies**, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based therapy and trauma-informed therapy. It might be helpful to learn more about what type of therapy your service provider offers or which type you feel would work best for you. If you start using one and find that it's not right for you, consider exploring other options.

### Support/accommodations for disabilities

It's important to know that you may be able to get support at work or school if you are experiencing mental health challenges or a disability. There are supports that can make it more comfortable for you to work or study. These are sometimes called accommodations.

A guide has been developed to help post-secondary students through the process of getting academic accommodations for mental health challenges. You can find it online at [https://brocku.ca/health-wellness-accessibility/wp-content/uploads/sites/194/English\\_Accessible\\_Guide\\_Accommodating-Students-Handbook\\_August-7-2015.pdf](https://brocku.ca/health-wellness-accessibility/wp-content/uploads/sites/194/English_Accessible_Guide_Accommodating-Students-Handbook_August-7-2015.pdf).





## Medication

**Family doctors** and **psychiatrists** can prescribe medication, if that is part of your treatment. There is no right or wrong decision about using medication. You can talk with a doctor so that they can help you decide whether medication may be a helpful tool for you.

Note: If you are on medication, **combining it with psychotherapy** can result in greater improvements to your mental health. If you decide to use natural supplements, it's best to let your doctor know this.

To track your medication and other important health information, you can use MyHealth Passport, a wallet-sized card that allows you to access all this information. The card, developed by The Hospital for Sick Children, is available at [www.sickkids.ca/myhealthpassport/Default.aspx](http://www.sickkids.ca/myhealthpassport/Default.aspx).

Check out the Medication for YOUth Resource at [www.camh.ca/-/media/files/medication-for-youth-resource-pdf](http://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/medication-for-youth-resource-pdf) to learn more about a type of antidepressant called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs).

**It is important to be honest with your doctor about any drugs or substances you are using** to understand how they will interact with your medication. If you are worried about confidentiality, see **My Rights (page 11)** for more information.

If you are using substances, you may want to learn about **harm reduction** techniques or ways to use substances more safely. You can ask your service provider about harm reduction supports they may offer, or search online for harm reduction services in your community.





## People who I want support from

No matter who you are, and no matter where you are, there are people who can support you. Lots of times when we think of mental health or substance use treatment, we automatically think of psychiatrists and counsellors. However, there are many different people who can help.

**You may start by explaining your situation and needs to a service provider** (like your **family doctor** or **case worker**).

Then, you can decide together what type of help will be best for you. Your service provider may be able to help you get in touch with the service you're interested in. They may contact the service for you or tell you how to contact it yourself.

Some examples of people who might be able to help you are case navigators, mental health nurses, psychotherapists or counsellors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and peer support workers. Once you connect with a service provider, you should see whether you feel comfortable with them. Look for a good personal connection, as well as professional training. If one service provider isn't a good fit, it's OKAY to let someone know. They might be able to help you find someone else who may be a better fit.

Important people in your life may also be able to help. Think about friends, family or a partner, if you have one. Reaching out for help may not be easy. If you haven't spoken to friends or family about your mental health or substance use before, think about who you might approach. Who may be best able to offer support or understand what you are experiencing? If you can't reach out to these people, you could speak to a teacher, guidance counsellor or coach instead.

### Tips on reaching out to those close to you

#### 1. Know there is nothing wrong with asking for help.

Lots of people need someone to talk to at some point in their lives. There's nothing wrong with this – it's completely okay!

#### 2. Prepare what you want to say.

If you are nervous, you may want to plan out what you will say. You can do this by writing out some points explaining **how your mental health and/or substance use has been affecting your life**.

#### 3. Decide how you want to have the conversation.

Pick a time when both of you are relaxed and in a comfortable space. If it might be too hard to speak to them, you could write a short note, email or text explaining how you feel.

#### 4. Be clear about what you need.

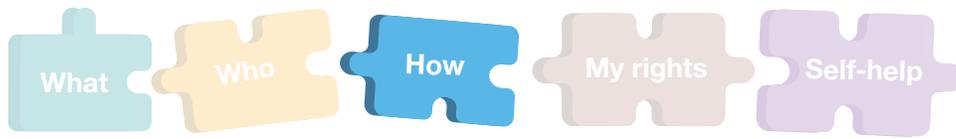
Let the person know how you feel and that you would like to get more help. Tell them you're looking for their support.

*"Can I talk to you? I've been feeling really stressed and down about things for a while now. It would be helpful to talk to you about what I'm going through."*

*"I'm not feeling like myself these days. I'm tired and sad all the time—I don't feel right. I want to see someone who can help. I want to learn what to do to start feeling better."*

#### 5. Reach out to someone else if you need to.

Hopefully this person will support you, but some people may not understand. Sometimes people may understand but are not in a position to help. If they aren't able to help, try not to be discouraged. See if there is another person you can reach out to instead.



## How to get the services you need

In this guide, “access” refers to how easy or hard it is to get the services that you need. This section will give you information on how to find the services that may be right for you.

For a first appointment, a service provider may gather more information about you and how you feel. It can help to write down everything you want to talk to them about at your appointment. For example, you might want to talk about your **symptoms, medication** you’re taking, any **questions** or **concerns** you have, or anything your family doctor may have recommended you ask the service provider.

### How I want to book appointments

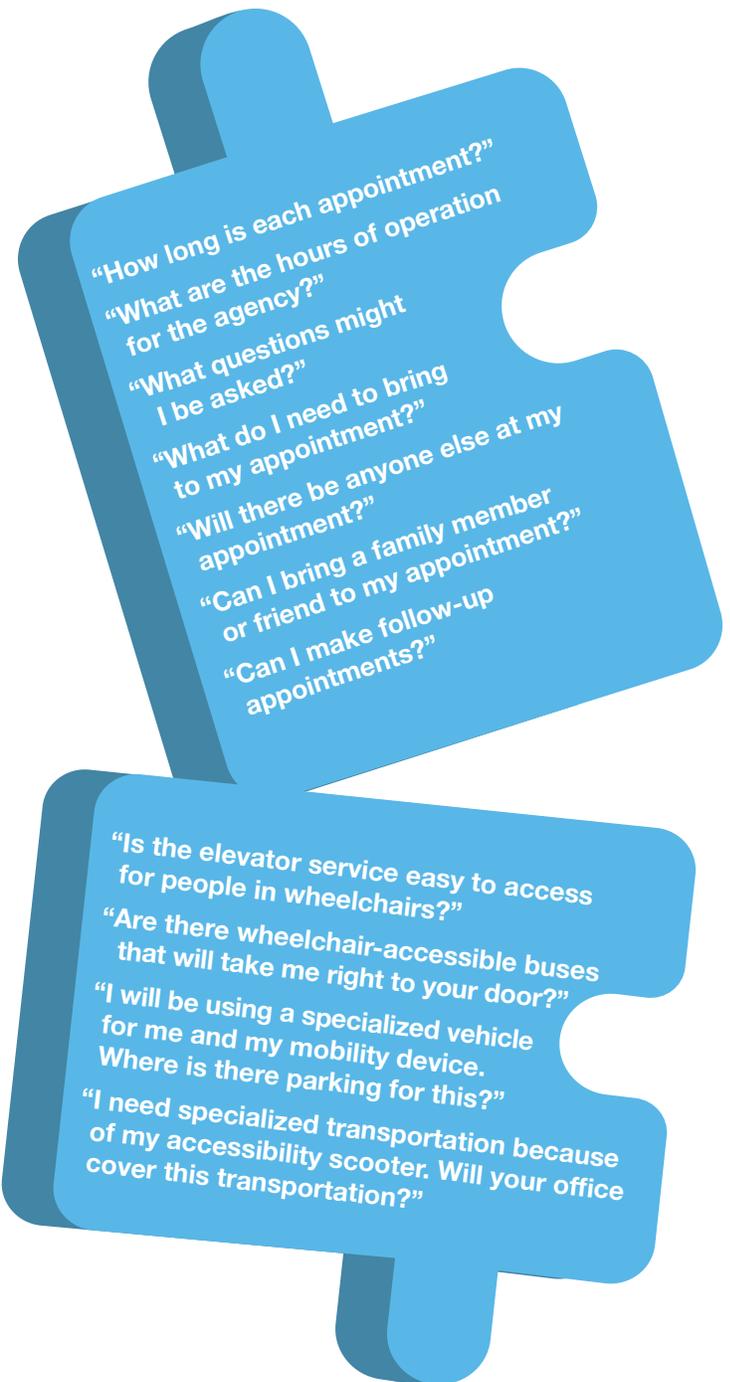
Some services offer different ways to schedule your appointments (e.g., over the phone, by text, through their website, or with a support person who books you in). Once you have booked an appointment, write it down in a place you will remember. You might put a note on your wall or in the calendar on your phone. If you are not able to attend your appointment, try to call the service and let them know as soon as you can, or at least 24 hours before your appointment. Find out about their cancellation policy. Some services may charge you a fee for cancelling without much notice.

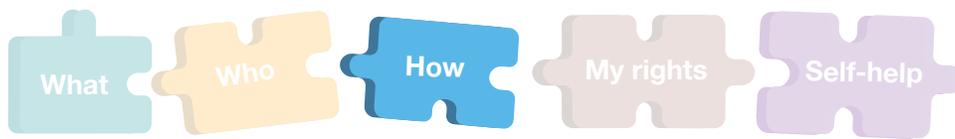
### Transportation support

If you are planning on taking public transit to and from appointments, it is important to consider the costs. Find out if the agency can help out with the costs of getting to and from appointments. Ask if they can cover transit, how it works, and if there is a limit to how much they will cover.

### Mobility device-accessible

A mobility aid is any manual or electric wheelchair, scooter, walker, crutch, prosthesis or other aid that is specially designed to help people get around. It may be difficult to access services if they don't have a physically accessible environment. If this applies to you, it would be good to talk to them about your needs.





## Health insurance in Canada

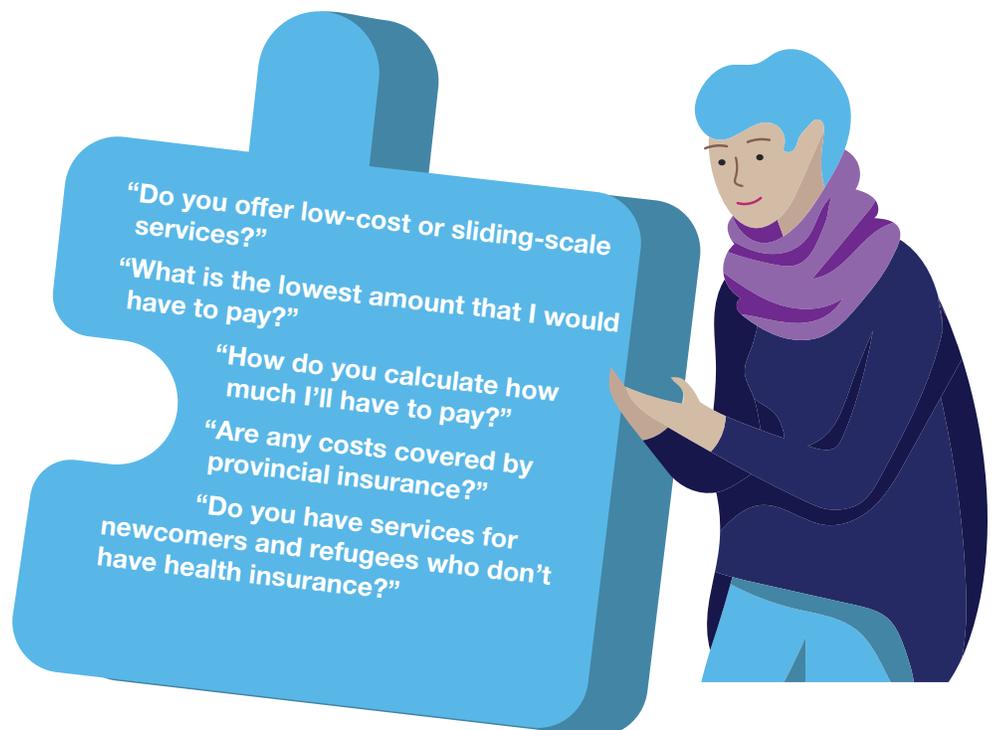
Some services are available without a health card and at no cost. Others ask for provincial or private insurance, or you'll need to pay for them yourself.

**Provincial and territorial health insurance** is available to all Canadian citizens living in the province or territory. Permanent residents and people with other residency situations can also apply for it. For newcomers and refugees, there may be a waiting period. Most of these insurance plans don't provide much or any coverage for prescription medication or visits to counsellors or therapists. For more information, see [www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/new-life-canada/health-care-card.html#system](http://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/new-life-canada/health-care-card.html#system) and [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-cards.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-cards.html).

Costs that aren't covered by provincial or territorial plans might be covered by **private insurance**. Private plans are ones that people choose and pay for themselves or that they get as part of their job or university benefits or through a family member's or partner's benefits. A Non-Insured Health Benefits Program also exists for people who are **First Nations or Inuit**. For more information, see [www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1572537161086/1572537234517](http://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1572537161086/1572537234517).

## Free and low-cost services

If you are not able to pay a lot for services, you might want to search for free and sliding-scale services. Sliding-scale services base the fee on people's income.





# My rights

## CONSENT

Consent is a term used to talk about **how decisions around your medical care are made.**

Consent means **having choice** and the ability to say yes or no to different treatments and service options. According to the Health Care Consent Act, a person of any age can agree to (or refuse) treatment and choose the type of treatment they want as long as they are considered capable of making this decision.

**Consent must always be given willingly.** That means the choice you make should be your own, and nobody should force you to make the decision.

**You must be able to consent to your treatment.** This means that you understand the information you are given about your medical care. If you don't understand, you are allowed to ask questions. You should be able to get answers in words that you understand so you can make a decision you are comfortable with. You should also be able to understand the risks and benefits of making this decision.

**Sometimes, you may not be able to choose or agree to your treatment. This may be because you are unwell and unable to understand what is happening. In this case, your parents, caregivers, a family member, doctor or legal authority might make decisions for you.** As your treatment continues and you get better, you may be able to give consent later. This is a changing process—and that is okay. When possible, you should always be involved in the decision making, even if you can't make the final decision yourself.

## CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY

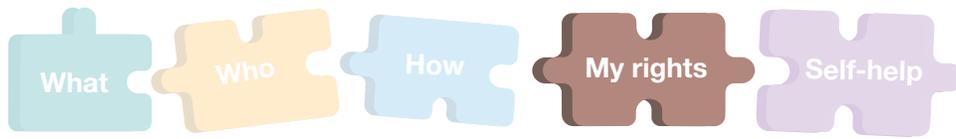
### Privacy

Different people have different comfort levels when it comes to sharing personal information. Some people don't want others to know they are having mental health or substance use challenges or seeking help. It's important that your privacy is respected and that steps are taken to make you feel safe and secure.

In Canada, there are federal and provincial laws about privacy and personal health information. In general, service agencies must:

- get your permission to collect and share your personal information
- tell you why they are collecting your personal information
- store your personal health information safely
- let you see your personal health information, if you ask to see it.

To find out more about the Canadian laws on privacy, check out [www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/](http://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/).



## Confidentiality

Things that you tell a service provider usually just stay between you and the service provider—this is often called “confidentiality.” As a young person, you have the right to have the things you talk about with your care team kept confidential. That means what you share with your care team stays between you and them, except in conditions that are outlined in the box below. Every service provider should explain their policies on privacy and confidentiality. If you want more information, ask your service provider for a copy of their policy on privacy and confidentiality or ask them to go through it with you.

**There are times when an agency or service provider can legally share things you talked about WITHOUT your permission or awareness. They might even be required by law to report things you shared. Here are the three most common reasons why this would happen:**

1. if you tell a service provider that **you or a child (under age 18) are being abused or neglected** (physical, emotional or sexual abuse).
2. if you're at **risk for seriously hurting yourself or someone else**.
3. if you're **involved with the law or legal system**. The courts can ask your service provider for your personal health information.

“In what situations would you have to break confidentiality with me?”

“If you feel the need to break confidentiality, would you tell me?”

“How does the agency keep records? Who can access them? Am I allowed access?”

“If someone is a minor (under age 18), under what circumstances will guardians or other authorities be contacted?”

“Is there any way that someone could find out who I am when I’m using an anonymous service?”

“How do you make sure everything is kept confidential and anonymous?”

“If I want to be anonymous, how will you get a hold of me without anyone finding out?”



## Anonymous services

Anonymous services are a type of service where you don't have to indicate who you are. For example, many phone helplines and online mental health services are anonymous. People may want to use anonymous services for different reasons. They might feel more comfortable being "unknown," especially in a small town where everyone knows one another.

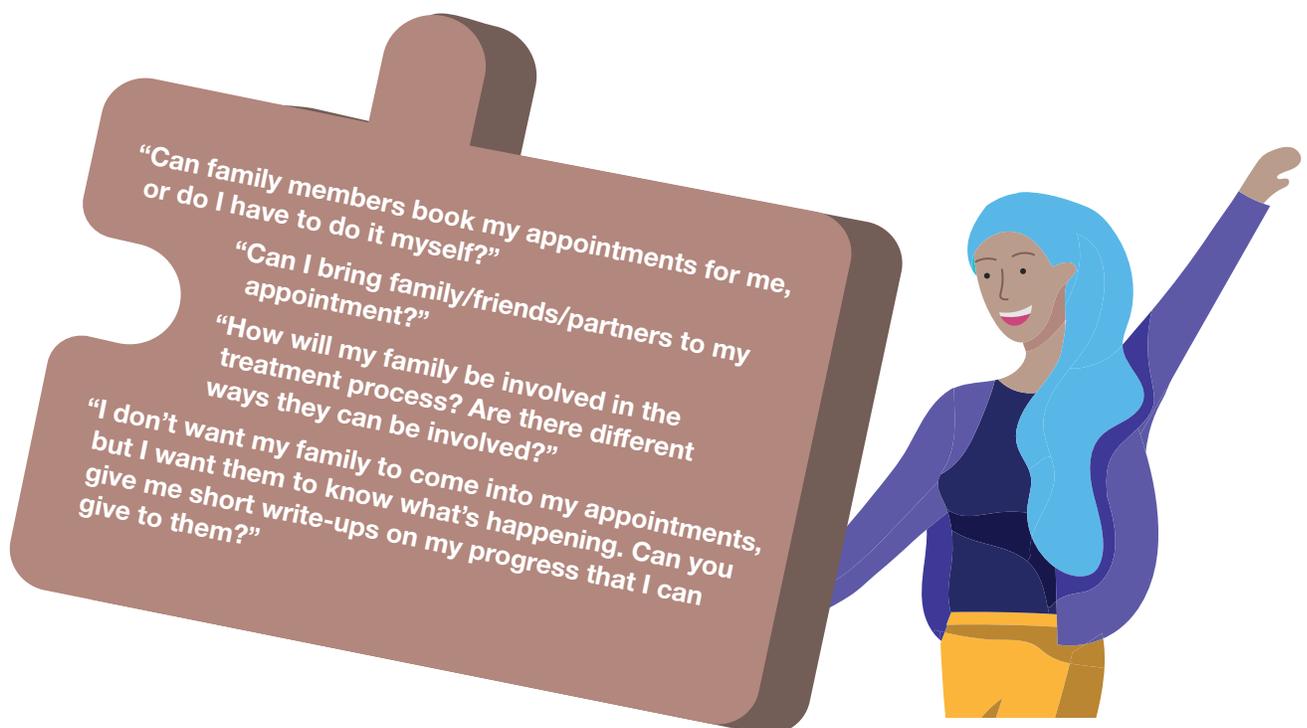
## Family involvement

Many services will let you decide who you consider to be a part of your family. You might consider family members to be anyone in your circle who gives you emotional support and advocates for you when you don't feel like you can advocate for yourself.

At different points throughout your treatment, you can decide whether it could be helpful to involve family members so they can support you. You get to decide how much, or how little, your family is involved in your care.

## FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

Sometimes, you may connect with staff who are very supportive and understanding. It's also possible that you may not feel heard or respected by some staff. This can be very upsetting. Most hospitals have a client or patient relations program where you can share feedback about your experience. You should be able to provide anonymous feedback or reach out to a person you trust or who hasn't been involved in your care if you don't want to go to your provider directly with feedback. Other types of organizations should have ways you can share feedback too.





## How can I help myself?

You can use self-help techniques to help with some of the struggles you may be facing, or whenever you feel overwhelmed. Here are some ways you can look after yourself. You might use these strategies in addition to treatment, or on their own.

### EMOTIONAL

- Having a conversation with a loved one
- Doing an activity that makes you happy
- Practising a mindfulness exercise (that you can access online) or writing a list of things you are grateful for
- Writing a poem or reading a book
- Creating or using a self-care box filled with items that make you feel better when you are feeling down or uneasy

### PHYSICAL

- Eating something healthy
- Getting a good sleep
- Going for a walk or doing a physical activity you enjoy
- Taking deep breaths
- Dancing to your favourite songs
- Taking a bubble bath

### SENSORY

- Smelling a candle or essential oils
- Petting an animal
- Cuddling a soft blanket
- Using a weighted blanket
- Sitting outside in the grass
- Smelling some flowers

### PRACTICAL

- Taking a shower
- Brushing your teeth
- Tidying your living space
- Making a meal you enjoy
- Planning out your week in a calendar
- Doing your laundry

### SPIRITUAL

- Spending time alone
- Praying or practising your beliefs
- Meditating or doing yoga
- Being in nature
- Journaling
- Volunteering for a cause you care about

### SOCIAL

- Going on a date with your loved one
- Going to see your family or friends
- Deleting negative pages on social media
- Joining a new club
- Finding a community online
- Texting a friend to see how they are doing



## For more help

This guide is meant to assist you in determining and understanding how to best access services that may be useful to you. Though it may take some time to figure out the best fit, there are possibilities, options and people available to help.

If you're having trouble reaching out, try to talk or text with a helpline—like [Kids Help Phone \(1 800 668-6868\)](tel:18006686868), or text [CONNECT to 686868](text:CONNECT686868) to chat with a volunteer crisis responder.

If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, you deserve help. Please explore the resources at [www.camh.ca/gethelp](http://www.camh.ca/gethelp). If you feel safe in the moment, follow up with your family doctor or care team.

If you require **immediate, in-person emergency care**, call **911**, or go to your nearest **emergency department**.



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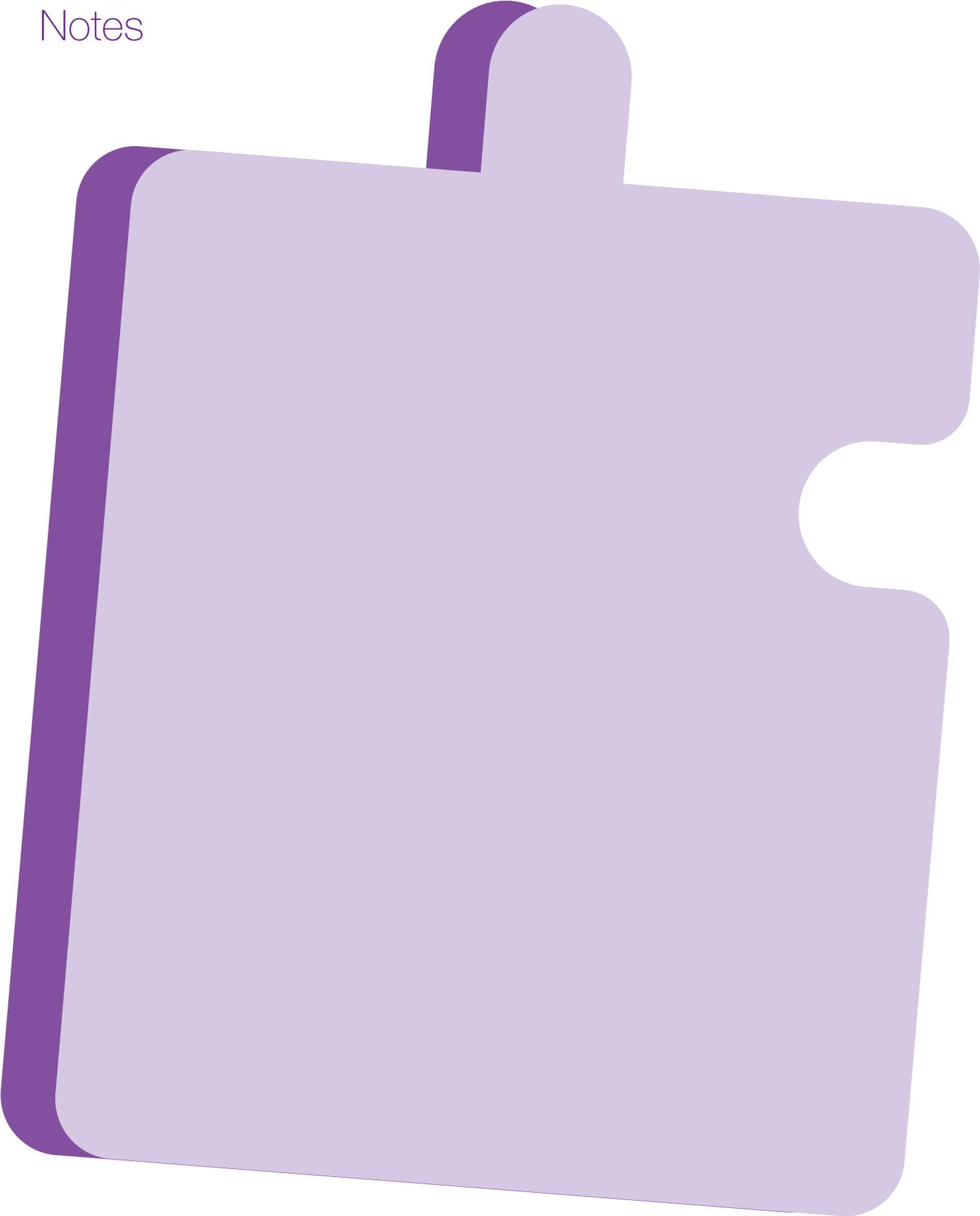
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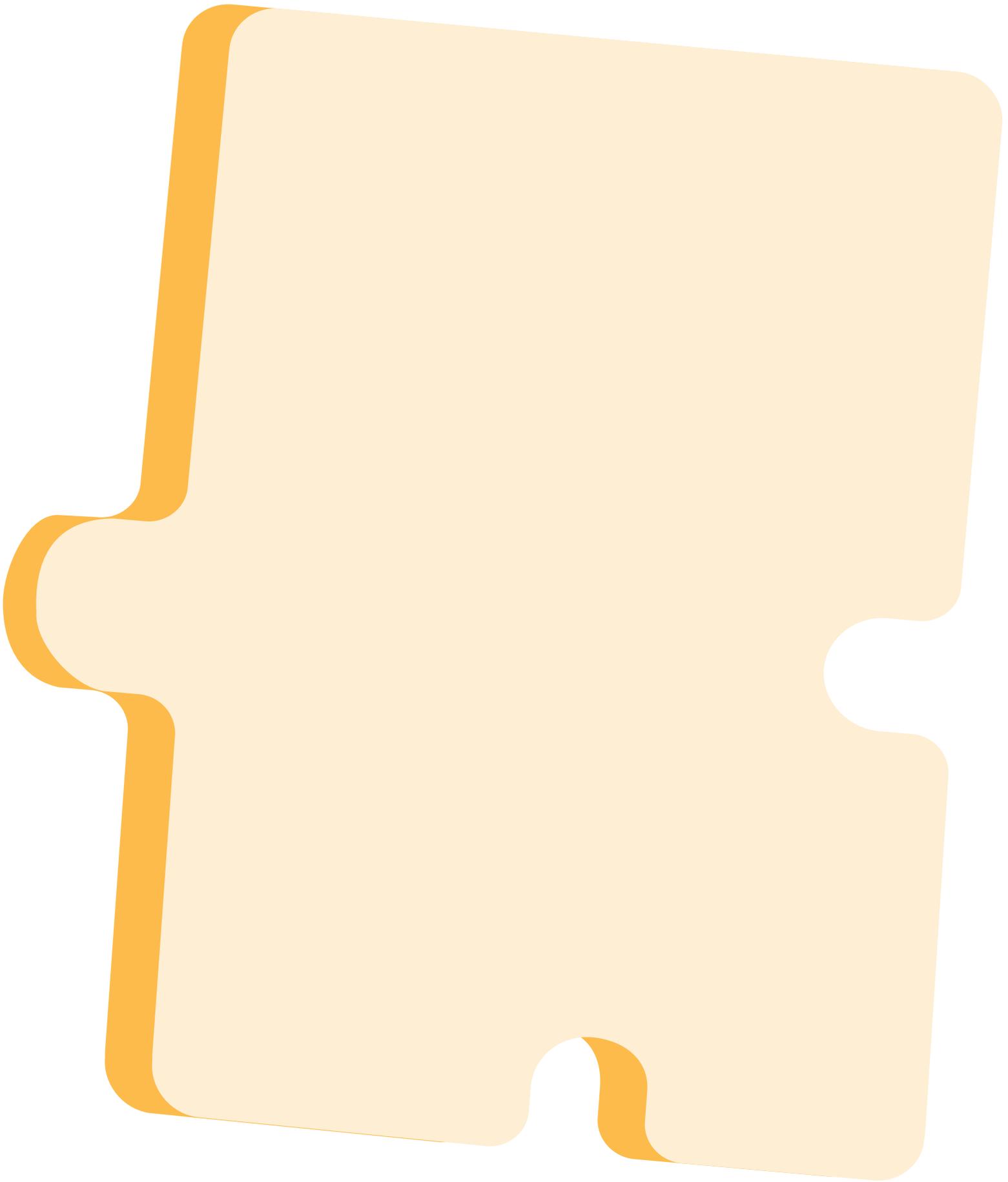
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Notes





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