

Understanding Depression in Old Age



Depression is a common mood disorder. Its major symptoms include persistent low mood, loss of interest or drive, and negative thoughts. These symptoms will affect one's daily life, occupational and social functioning. People afflicted with severe depression may be at risk for suicidality.



Symptoms of depression



Multiple physical complaints with unknown causes



Sleep disturbance

Change in appetite



Fatigue



Physical aspect

- Loss of interest
- Diminished drive and motivation



- Social isolation
- Social withdrawal



- Restlessness
- Psychomotor retardation

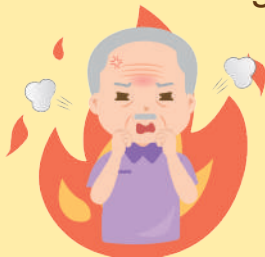
Emotional aspect

Behavioral aspect



Persistent low mood
and feeling frustrated

Feeling irritable



or



anxious

ional
ect

Cognitive
aspect

oural
ect

- Concentration difficulty or indecisiveness
- Forgetfulness
- Sense of worthlessness
- Feeling guilty, helpless and hopeless
- Suicidal thoughts and even concrete plans
(If present, **should seek medical attention promptly!**)



?

If you or elderly persons around you have multiple symptoms of the above which persist at least for 2 weeks while affecting daily life, please seek medical attention at once.

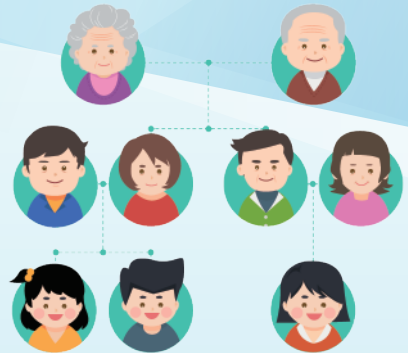
Causes of depression

◆ Biological factor

- Dysregulation of neurotransmitters
- Impact of other medical conditions, e.g. stroke, thyroid dysfunction, Vitamin B12 deficiency, etc.

◆ Genetic factor

People with a family history have a twofold to threefold increase in risk of depression but depression can also occur in people without such history.



◆ Psychosocial factor

- Predisposing factor: Stressful life events in childhood
- Precipitating factor: Significant changes in life or difficulties in adjustment, e.g. illnesses, retirement, changes in family or living conditions, loss of spouse, etc.
- People in lack of social support, e.g. living alone, having no relatives or friends are prone to depression.



Treatment for depression

Depression is curable. Treatment options include:

◆ Psychotherapy:

To change negative thoughts and behavioural patterns and to learn mood management.

◆ Medication:

To regulate neurotransmitters in the brain for alleviation of depressive symptoms. Patients must follow doctor's instructions when taking medication.

Prevention of depression and mood management tips

Adopt healthy lifestyle



Adequate sleep
Balanced diet



Fostering interests
Sharing feelings
with others



Physical and social
activities
Relaxation exercise

How can family and friends help people with depression?

- ◆ Do not take it lightly when they talk about suicide. Show your concern, keep them company and inform doctors at once.
- ◆ Encourage them to see doctor promptly and remind them to follow medical regimen.
- ◆ Listen to them patiently, offer them your acceptance, care and support.
- ◆ Encourage and accompany them to engage in pleasurable activities.

Social Resources



<i>Name of organization</i>	<i>Tel. no.</i>	<i>Website</i>
<i>Suicide Prevention Services</i>	<i>2382 0000</i>	<i>https://www.sps.org.hk</i>
<i>The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong</i>	<i>2389 2222</i>	<i>https://www.sbhk.org.hk</i>
<i>Samaritans Hong Kong</i>	<i>2896 0000</i>	<i>https://samaritans.org.hk</i>
<i>Hospital Authority Mental Health Direct</i>	<i>2466 7350</i>	<i>https://www.ha.org.hk</i>
<i>Social Welfare Department Hotline</i>	<i>2343 2255</i>	<i>https://www.swd.gov.hk</i>
<i>Mental Health Support Hotline</i>	<i>18111</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Shall We Talk</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>https://shallwetalk.hk</i>

Elderly Health Service, Department of Health

Website: www.elderly.gov.hk

Elderly Health Infoline: 2121 8080

