

Staying positive and preventing depression as you get older

The life changes that come with ageing can lead to depression. To learn more about preventing and treating depression in older age, read on.

What you should know

- Depression is an illness characterized by persistent sadness and a loss of interest in activities that you normally enjoy, accompanied by an inability to carry out daily activities, for at least two weeks.
- In addition, people with depression normally have several of the following: a loss of energy; a change in appetite; sleeping more or less; anxiety; reduced concentration; indecisiveness; restlessness; feelings of worthlessness, guilt, or hopelessness; and thoughts of self-harm or suicide.
- Depression is common in older people but often overlooked and untreated.
- Depression among older people is often associated with physical conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic pain; difficult life events, such as losing a partner; and a reduced ability to do things that were possible when younger.
- Older people are at a high risk of suicide.
- Depression is treatable, with talking therapies or antidepressant medication or a combination of these.



REMEMBER:

There is a lot that can be done to prevent, and treat, depression in older age.

What you can do if you are feeling down, or think you may be depressed

- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings.
- If you think you are depressed, seek professional help. Your local health-care worker or doctor is a good place to start.
- Keep up with activities that you have always enjoyed, or find alternatives if previous activities are no longer possible.
- Stay connected. Keep in contact with family and friends.
- Eat at regular intervals and get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly if you can, even if it's just a short walk.
- Avoid or restrict alcohol intake and only take medicine as prescribed by your health-care provider.