



Depression And Older People

What causes depression in older people?

Some people believe that depression is a normal part of getting older, but this is not true. As with younger people, depression in older people can be caused by a variety of factors. These may include the following:

Physical health

You are more susceptible to physical health problems when you are older and these can put you at increased risk of developing associated Depression. If you have physical problems, like mobility problems or sensory impairments, then you may stop participating in activities, and feel more frail and worried for your personal safety. However, treating your Depression can also have a positive affect on physical health.

Loss

As you get older, you may experience loss in a variety of ways. Loss can be through the death of close friends or family members, loss of social contact, family breakdown, adjusting to retirement, loss of financial status, feeling you've lost your skills and, if you need to move into supported care, loss of a home and familiar surroundings.

Isolation

You may also feel more isolated and that there is no social support or community spirit in your area. This is made worse in rural areas by poor transport links and a lack of services.

Financial status

Some older people find that they experience financial difficulties. After you retire, you may find yourself living on a smaller income and not able to do as much as you used to. Claiming benefits can be stressful and complicated.

Caring responsibilities

You may find yourself caring for a dependent relative or spouse who is ill themselves. Being a carer can be difficult and stressful and this can put a strain on your health.

Difficult events in the past

Events such as abuse, bullying and institutional care in childhood can leave you vulnerable to bouts of Depression all your life. As you get older, these may affect you more than recent events.



Some Signs of Depression

Symptoms may include:-

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling inadequate
- Anxiety
- Feeling negative about your life
- Not liking yourself, feeling ugly
- Feeling unable to enjoy things that you used to like doing
- Feeling guilty or bad
- Feeling agitated
- Feeling unhappy, miserable and lonely a lot of the time
- Feeling irritable or moody
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Loss of energy or motivation
- Loss of sex drive
- Disturbed sleep
- Poor concentration
- Frequent minor health problems, such as headaches or stomach-aches
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

If symptoms are present for more than two weeks and are affecting your life, contact one of the organisations listed on this factsheet or talk to your GP.

Treating your Depression

Ask for help

You may be from a generation when showing feelings was discouraged and mental ill health was viewed as a weakness. Or, you may feel that you don't want to bother anyone with your problems - that they have better things to do than to listen to you. Beliefs like these can make you feel that you don't want to discuss your problems with your doctor or your family and friends. However, Depression is an illness and just as treatable for an older person as it is for younger people. Asking for help can be very difficult, but it is an important step towards getting well.

Your GP

One way to get help is to speak to your GP. Building up a good relationship with your GP can be a real help in getting better. If you find that your GP doesn't know much about Depression in older people, or you feel that it is difficult to speak to him or her, it may be worth finding out if there is another GP in your practice who knows more about Depression or who is easier to talk to. It is perfectly acceptable to make an appointment to see a different GP in the same practice.

Antidepressants

Antidepressant drugs work by increasing the levels of certain chemicals in the brain. There are many different types of antidepressants and different people will respond to different drugs. Like all medication, antidepressants may cause unpleasant effects and it is very important that you tell your GP if you experience any bad side-effects.

Talking therapies

There are different psychological therapies, which can include cognitive behavioural, interpersonal or psychodynamic therapy and counselling. These types of talking treatments are carried out on the NHS, although availability and waiting times vary, and may also be available privately. Speak to your GP about

what is available in your area, or contact us and we will help you find therapists in your area. We can't recommend therapists, but we can let you know which ones are accredited with a national body.

Self-Help

Can you join a self-help support group? Depression Alliance Scotland runs support groups for people of all ages in Scotland. Often people who attend our groups are surprised at how much they have in common, even though they come from different backgrounds and generations.

If a group is not for you, there are many self-help books that you may find helpful. Alternative therapies, like yoga and acupuncture may help you relax and feel better about yourself. Consider taking up a new hobby; it will give you something to do and may be a way of making new friends if you are isolated. Exercise, such as walking, swimming and dancing, may also lift your mood and provide a way to meet new people.

You may need help with issues such as poor physical health, isolation, bereavement or bad housing. Age Concern Scotland can put you in touch with local services and Cruse provides bereavement counselling. Their contact details are below.

Remember...

You don't have to live with Depression just because you are older; you have a right to support, treatment and recovery.



For Help and Support

Depression Alliance Scotland

Write to us for free at FREEPOST NAT 19086, Edinburgh EH12 5BR, phone 0845 123 23 20, email info@dascot.org or visit our website at www.dascot.org

Age Concern Scotland

Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR.
Scottish Helpline for Older People: 0845 125 9732
Website www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk

CRUSE Bereavement Care Scotland

Head Office Riverview House, Friarton Road, Riverview House, Friarton Road, Perth PH2 8DF (branches throughout Scotland)
Tel: 01738 444 178, email: info@crusescotland.org.uk, website www.crusescotland.org.uk