

DEPRESSION

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is not just an occasional feeling of being sad or moody due to life's setbacks, which is what most people normally experience from time to time. It is a mood disorder that can be described as an overwhelming feeling of sadness and despair, which interferes with a person's daily routine, work and social life, or causes significant distress.

WHO ARE AT RISK OF DEPRESSION?

The second Singapore Mental Health Study, conducted in 2016, revealed that depression is the most common mental illness in Singapore's adult population.



1 in 16 people were found to experience depression in their lifetime, which was higher compared to the first study conducted in 2010. Depression is usually more common among females than males.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

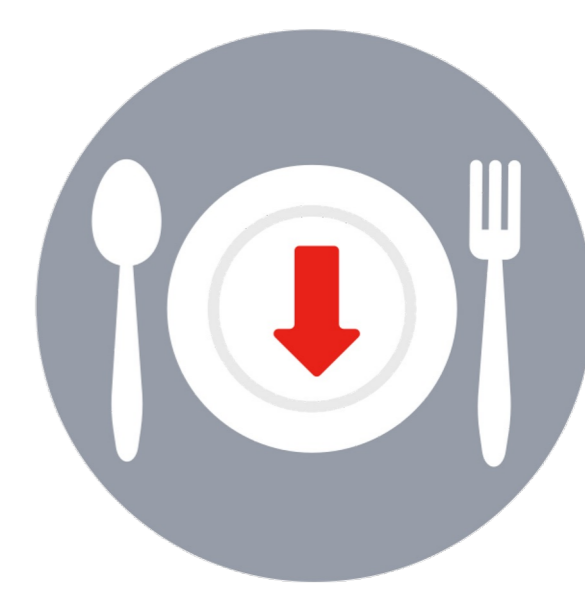
Depression is diagnosed when at least five out of the nine symptoms occur nearly every day, for two weeks or longer:



Depressed mood or irritability most of the day



Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed



Loss of appetite and weight



Insomnia or sleeping more than normal



Feeling restless and getting agitated more easily



Feeling fatigued (tired)



Unable to concentrate and think clearly

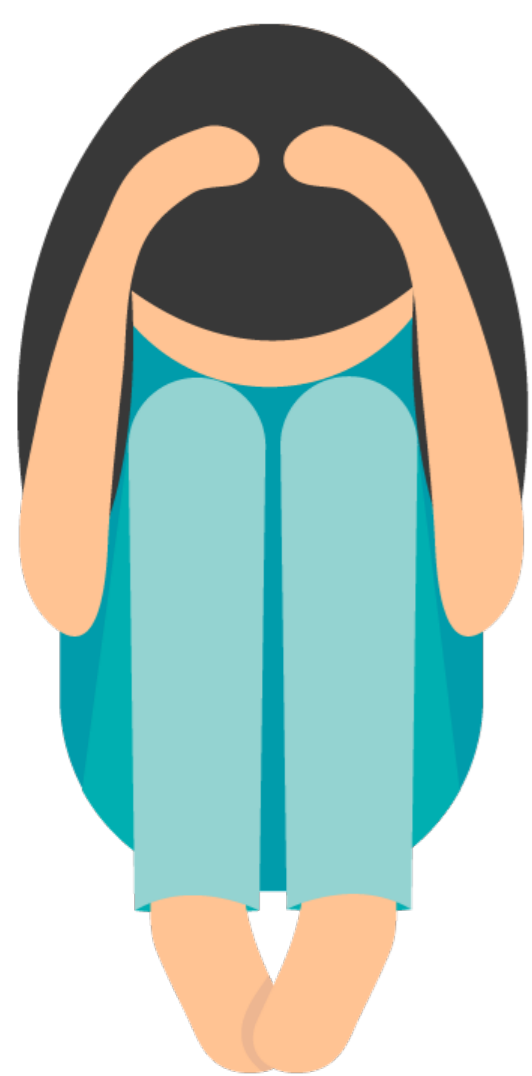


Feeling worthless and guilty



Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?



There are many possible causes for depression, including hereditary or genetic factors, stressful life events, medications and general medical conditions. It is believed that a combination of genetic, psychological and environmental factors can cause depression. Some factors that can trigger the onset of depression may include:

- Relationship problems
- Financial difficulties
- Chronic illnesses
- Loss of job/ retirement
- Lack of support such as being alone/ having few or no friends
- Loss of a loved one



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HOW TO MANAGE DEPRESSION?

The good news is that depression is highly treatable.

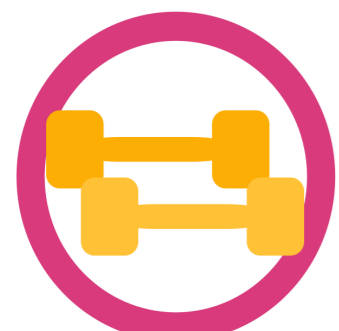
Depression can be managed through a range of treatment types, from lifestyle changes, therapy to medication.

Treatment needs vary from person to person.



Lifestyle changes include:

● Eating a balanced diet



● Regular exercise



● Reducing stress



● Having sufficient sleep



● Avoiding alcohol consumption and smoking



● Improving your social support by keeping in regular contact with friends and family, or consider joining a class or group

There are many different forms of therapy such as **cognitive behavioural therapy** which helps to reframe negative thinking and teaches you to use behavioural skills to cope with negative feelings.



Medication may also help relieve some of the symptoms of depression.

There are many different types of antidepressants, and all are equally effective although they have different side effects.

The most often used antidepressants include:

- Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI)
- Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)
- Tricyclics Antidepressants (TCAs)

Other medications such as mood stabilizers or anti-psychotics may be added on to enhance the effects of antidepressants. Anti-anxiety medications may also be added for short-term use.

For some people, depression does not respond to medications. Other procedures such as Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) may be recommended.



Depression is not a disorder that you can treat on your own. If you think you are experiencing these symptoms, it is best to approach a mental health professional to find out what treatment is available and best suited to you. It is important to seek help early before the symptoms worsen.



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