



Depression Alliance Scotland



Depression in the later years



About Depression Alliance Scotland

Depression Alliance Scotland is the only charity working across Scotland for people affected by Depression. We offer support and understanding through our national information based services and group work in the community. We are committed to raising awareness of Depression and challenging the stigma that surrounds the condition.

We produce a series of factsheets on Depression,

- About Depression
- Depression and Older People A4 factsheet
- Caring for Carers - when a friend or family member has Depression
- A Good Night's Sleep
- Depression and Alcohol
- Food and Mood
- Depression at Christmas - A Survival Guide
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender - Me and My Mental health
- Look OK... Feel Crap? Depression in Young Adults

Single copies are free to addresses in Scotland. A small charge applies for multiple copies. Please contact us on 0845 123 23 20 or email info@dascot.org.

Depression in later life - a doctor's view

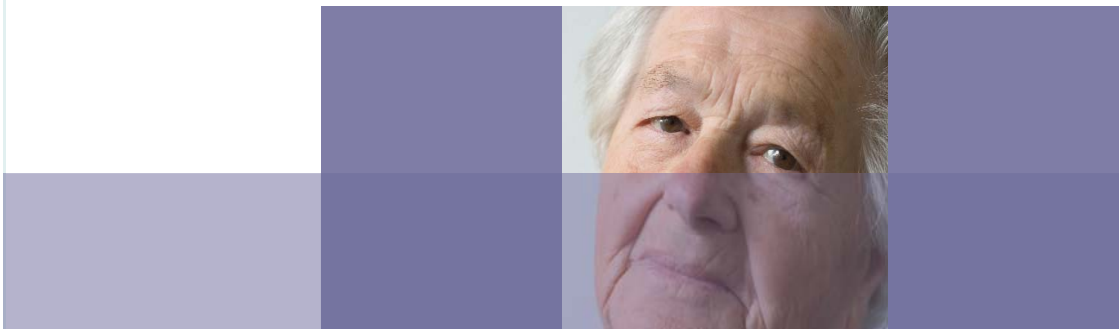
Depression is not an inevitable feature of ageing, but it is common. Major Depression affects one in seven older people to a degree that their day to day functioning is severely disrupted.

The public and many professionals fail to recognise this, largely due to a lack of knowledge. Older people are more often isolated from friends and family, they have less disposable income and often several medical problems. Solitude, bereavement, poverty and pain are major risk factors for Depression in old age.

Depression in old age can be just as successfully treated as Depression in younger age groups. Basic education about Depression is valuable not just for patients but for front line staff working with vulnerable groups such as those in hospital or care homes where levels of Depression can be higher than in the general population.

Depression in older people has for too long been under recognised, under diagnosed and under treated. The symptoms are often 'masked' and the consequences too often just attributed to age.

Dr Gillian McLean - Consultant Old Age Psychiatrist



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 any age group, Depression in older people can be caused by a variety of factors. These may include the following:

Long-term health conditions

You are more susceptible to long-term health problems when you are older and these can put you at increased risk of developing associated Depression. In addition other health problems may cause you to feel frail and worried about your personal safety and about what the future will hold. You may also stop participating in activities and seeing people which can affect your mood. However, treating your Depression can also have a positive effect on any other health problems you may have.

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.

“Having Depression and being old is not the end of the road ... life can be fulfilling with a little help from regular contact with peers ”

Robert Cook - Mood Project, West Lothian



Isolation

You may also feel more isolated and alone 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

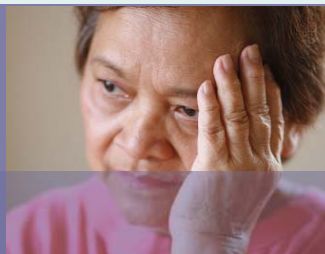
Some older people find that they experience financial difficulties. After you retire, you may find yourself living on a smaller income and not able to do as much as you used to. Claiming benefits can be stressful and complicated.

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 own health.

Abuse

Abuse in the past can leave you vulnerable to bouts of Depression all your life. As you get older, these past events may affect you more than recent events. Sadly some older people may be more vulnerable to abuse by carers or in some circumstances family members.



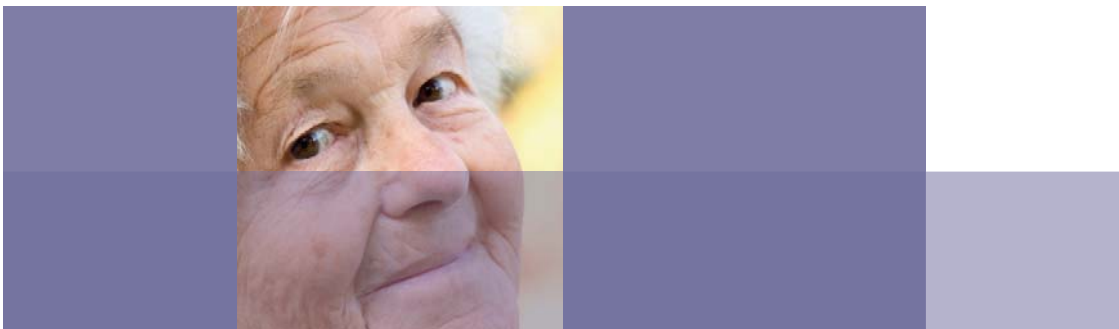
Some signs of Depression:

The symptoms of Depression will be different for everyone. Increased drowsiness, agitation and overeating are common in older people with Depression.

Symptoms of Depression may include:

- Disturbed sleep or sleeping too much
- Feeling agitated, irritable or angry
- Eating too much or too little
- Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, or inadequacy
- Anxiety
- Feeling unable to enjoy things that you used to like doing
- Feeling unhappy, miserable and lonely a lot of the time
- Loss of energy or motivation
- Poor concentration
- Frequent minor health problems, such as headaches or stomach-aches
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

If you notice several of these symptoms have been present for more than two weeks and are affecting your life, contact one of the the organisations listed in this booklet 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 a recognised medical condition 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

Sometimes Depression can look like other conditions, so it is important to see your GP to get a correct diagnosis. Building up a good relationship with your GP can be a real help in getting better. If your GP doesn't know much about Depression, or you feel that it is difficult to speak to him or her, 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 side-effects and it is important that you tell your GP if you experience any difficulties.

Treating your Depression *continued*

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 give you details of 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

Making changes in your own life to help improve your mood, often called self-help, is a good place to start. You might be able to join a group or club which will give you the opportunity to share experiences or practice your talents. There are some self-help groups in Scotland specifically for people who have Depression. If a group isn't for you, there are many self-help books and websites that you may find helpful. Contact us for more information about self-help groups and other resources.

“Every morning I could barely get out of bed to face the day. By the end of the day, I usually felt better, and gradually the improvement in my mood came earlier each day, until one day, I sat down about 11am, and I felt the depression lift – oh what relief!”

Derek Braid

There is good evidence to show that physical activity like walking, swimming and dancing lifts your mood and it can provide a way to meet new people. Alternative therapies, like yoga and acupuncture may help you relax and feel better about yourself. The food you eat can also affect how you think and feel. A healthy diet with vegetables, fruit, wholegrains and oil-rich foods such as fish can give you energy and help to improve your self-esteem.

Tackling the other issues

You may be feeling low because of other issues such as other health conditions, isolation, bereavement, caring for a relative or bad housing. These problems can feel distressing and overwhelming but there is help and support available to help you tackle them.

The Scottish Helpline for Older People can offer support and can put you in touch with local services that can help. Cruse provides bereavement counselling and Carers Scotland offer support for people caring for someone else. Alzheimer Scotland can help with memory problems. Details of all these organisations are on the next page.





For help and support

Depression Alliance Scotland

Tel: 0845 123 23 20 or 0131 467 3050

Email info@dascot.org, Website: www.dascot.org

Scottish Helpline for Older People

Tel: 0845 125 9732

Website: www.olderpeoplescotland.co.uk

Age Concern and Help the Aged Scotland

Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside,
Edinburgh EH9 1PR

Tel: 0845 833 0200, Email: enquiries@acscot.org.uk

Website: www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk

CRUSE Bereavement Care Scotland

Riverview House, Friarton Road, Perth PH2 8DF

Tel: 01738 444 178, Email: info@crusescotland.org.uk

Website: www.crusescotland.org.uk

“When you are older it is hard to accept that the person who has coped for all their years can have Depression. I used to get angry with myself and feel guilty because of my age, but it is no disgrace, it can affect all ages”. Nell McFadden

Carers Scotland,
91 Mitchell Street, Glasgow G1 3LN,
Helpline: 0808 808 7777, email: info@carerscotland.org
Website: www.carerscotland.org

Alzheimer Scotland
22 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7RN
Helpline: 0808 808 3000, email: alzheimerscot@alzscot.org
Website: www.alzscot.org

Samaritans
08457 90 90 90 (open 24 hours, 7 days a week),
Email: jo@samaritans.org, Website: www.samaritans.org

Breathing Space
0800 83 85 87 (6pm - 2am weeknights and 24 hours over the weekend)
Website: www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk



Remember

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

Depression Alliance Scotland

11 Alva Street,

Edinburgh, EH2 4PH

Tel: 0845 123 23 20 or 0131 467 3050

Email: info@dascot.org

Web: www.dascot.org and www.lookokfeelcrap.org

DAS is a registered charity SC 034740

Registered company no. 255656,

Registered office 11 Alva Street, Edinburgh EH2 4PH