



# Understanding depression

How common is depression?

What causes depression?

What are the signs and symptoms of depression?

How is depression diagnosed?

How is depression managed?

Are there tips that may also help during treatment?

How can I help someone who might be depressed?

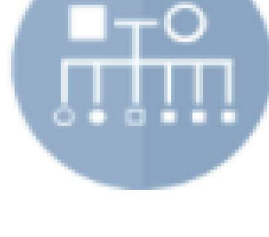
References

## How common is depression?

Depression is the most common mental disorder worldwide. In Malaysia, approximately 2.3 million people are affected by depression at some point in their lives. The prevalence of depression in Malaysia was estimated to be 8%-12% overall and approximately 20% among adolescents aged 13 to 17 years old.<sup>1-3</sup>

## What causes depression?

Depression often begins in adulthood, but it can happen at any age, including childhood. Researchers believe that depression is likely caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. These may include:<sup>4-6</sup>



- A personal or family history of depression.
- Medicines used to treat certain illnesses such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and Parkinson's disease. In addition, having depression can sometimes make these illnesses worse.

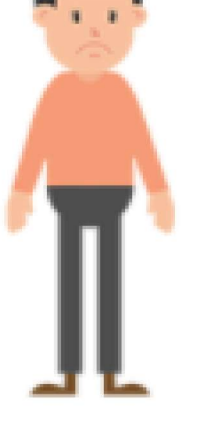


- Trauma, stress, or major changes in a person's life.
- Extended use of social media, particularly if cyberbullying is involved.



## What are the signs and symptoms of depression?

Depression has several signs and symptoms, and different people may have fewer or more signs and symptoms of the illness. For example, some people with depression may feel sad, while others may not. Signs and symptoms may be physical or emotional in nature. Some of the general signs and symptoms of depression include the following:



### Feeling sad, empty, or anxious<sup>4,7</sup>

These feelings may continue over time without getting better or going away



### Irritability<sup>4,7</sup>

You may get more cranky than usual. Your tolerance level may be low and you have anger outburst even over small matters



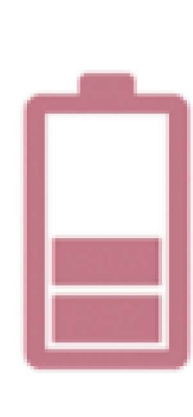
### Feeling helpless, worthless, or guilty<sup>4,7</sup>

You may feel bad about yourself or your life, or think too much about losses or failures



### Less interest in activities<sup>4,7</sup>

Hobbies or games that you usually enjoy no longer appeal to you. You may have little or no desire for social activities or sex



### Less energetic<sup>4,7</sup>

You may feel extremely tired. Daily routines and tasks may seem too hard to manage



### Talking or moving more slowly than usual<sup>4,7</sup>

You may experience slow body movements and take longer to speak even single sentences



### Restlessness<sup>4,7</sup>

Feeling restless or agitated without any specific reason. You may experience signs such as inability to sit still



### Trouble concentrating<sup>4,7</sup>

You may have trouble focusing. It may feel overwhelming to make decisions



### Changes in sleep pattern<sup>4,7</sup>

You may wake up too early or have trouble falling asleep. You may sleep much longer than usual



### Appetite or weight changes<sup>4,7</sup>

You may overeat or not feel hungry. Depression often leads to weight gain or weight loss



### Suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts<sup>4,7</sup>

This is the most serious symptom of depression. You may get frequent thoughts of death or plan ways to end your life



### Unexplained aches or pains<sup>4,7</sup>

Having aches or pains, cramps, or issues with digestion that are not caused by a physical problem and that do not go away with medical treatment

Different groups of people may also experience depression differently. For example:<sup>8-10</sup>



- **Women** may have feelings of sadness, worthlessness, and guilt.
- **Men** may hide their emotions and show anger, aggressive behaviors, and irritability. They may also show signs of physical issues such as a rapid heartbeat and problems with digestion.



- In **older children and teens**, signs may include sulking, issues with school, and irritability.



- **Younger children** may refuse to go school, act like they are sick, hold on to parents, or worry that their parents may die.



- **Older adults** may feel tired, have difficulty sleeping, or become grumpy or irritable. They may also get confused or have trouble paying attention. Other age-related medical conditions such as heart disease may also cause or contribute to depression.

## How is depression diagnosed?



Seeking medical help for depression is critical. If you think you may be depressed, it is important to talk with your healthcare provider. Do not let the shame or perceived stigma stop you from getting help. As with any medical illness, getting treatment may help you get better.<sup>8,11</sup>



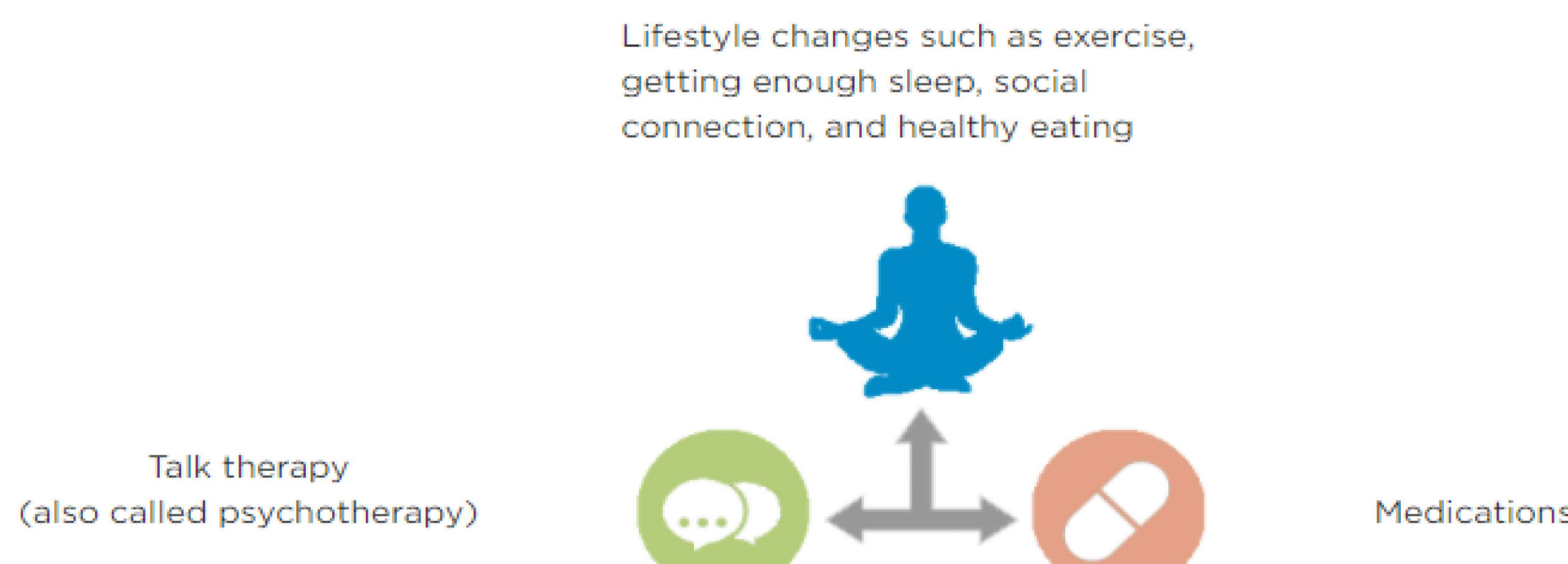
If you are not sure what to say about why you are making the appointment, do not hesitate to say that you are worried that you might have depression and want to be examined. Then, before your appointment, make a list of:<sup>8</sup>

- Any symptoms you have had (when the symptoms started, the severity of symptoms, how have the symptoms been treated, etc.).
- Key personal information including major stresses or life changes.
- All medications including supplements that you are taking.

Bring the list with you to your appointment to help you explain the way you feel to your healthcare provider. This will help you have a more meaningful discussion with your healthcare provider.<sup>8,9</sup>

## How is depression managed?

Even the most severe cases of depression can be treated. The earlier treatment begins, the more effective it can be. Management options may include:<sup>8,9,12-14</sup>



Remember that no two people experience depression the same way, therefore, it may take time to find the treatment that works best for you.

## Are there tips that may also help during treatment?

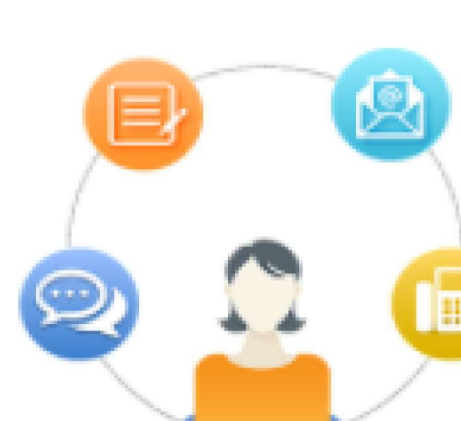
In addition to working with your healthcare provider to manage depression, there are other things you can do that may also help such as:<sup>8,9,12</sup>



- Be physically active
- Practice mindfulness
- Set priorities
- Spend time with other people
- Set realistic goals
- Delay life-changing decisions (for example, changing jobs) until you feel better

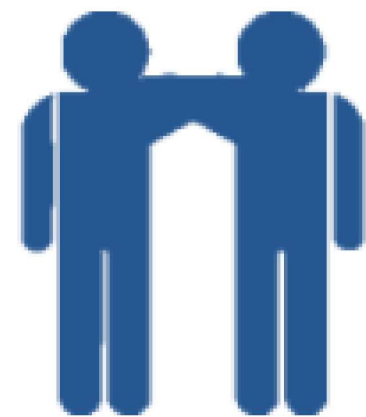
## How can I help someone who might be depressed?

If you suspect that someone known to you may be depressed, it is important that you try to reach out to the person and try to help him or her. That can be a difficult conversation to have, but there are a few things you can say to help make it easier. For example:<sup>15</sup>



- "I'm here for you. I want to hear how you're feeling."
- "You're not alone. Depression is an illness that many people have."
- "I want to help. Let's make an appointment with the doctor."
- "Call or message me anytime you want to talk."

Despite your best intentions, the person you are trying to help may not be open to it. Understand that this is not personal toward you. There are, however, things you may try:<sup>16</sup>



- Be supportive on a consistent basis. Your support may be accepted over time.
- Focus on the way the person is behaving and how treatment may help.
- Get help from family and friends by having them reach out to the person.

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