



Tips on Healthy Ageing

DEPRESSION IN LATER LIFE

Depression is a mental health disorder characterised by symptoms which can include persistent low mood, loss of pleasure in previously enjoyed activities, loss of energy, poor sleep, changes in appetite and weight, poor concentration, feelings that life is no longer worthwhile (these may include thoughts of death or plans to commit suicide), guilty thoughts, agitation and/or slowing and loss of confidence.

About 1% of older people have a depression that would benefit from specialist treatment by a psychiatrist, but 10-20% have milder symptoms of depression that interfere with enjoyment of life and could be helped by talking therapies, social engagement or support, pain relief, treatment of associated illness or disability or (in some cases) by medication.

Some people wrongly believe that depression is an inevitable consequence of ageing. In fact severe depressions are somewhat less common in older people than among those of middle age. However, some aspects of the ageing process can predispose to depression.

Depression is more common in women than in men and is seen more often in people who are socially isolated, have chronic pain, incontinence or activity limitation due to physical illness or disability.

If you or someone close to you may have symptoms of depression it would be sensible to consult a general practitioner who can then assess the situation and arrange appropriate treatment and help as necessary. When ideas of suicide are experienced or expressed urgent assessment by a local mental health team or at a local hospital or emergency department is indicated.

More information about depression is available from **beyondblue**

(<http://www.beyondblue.org.au>)