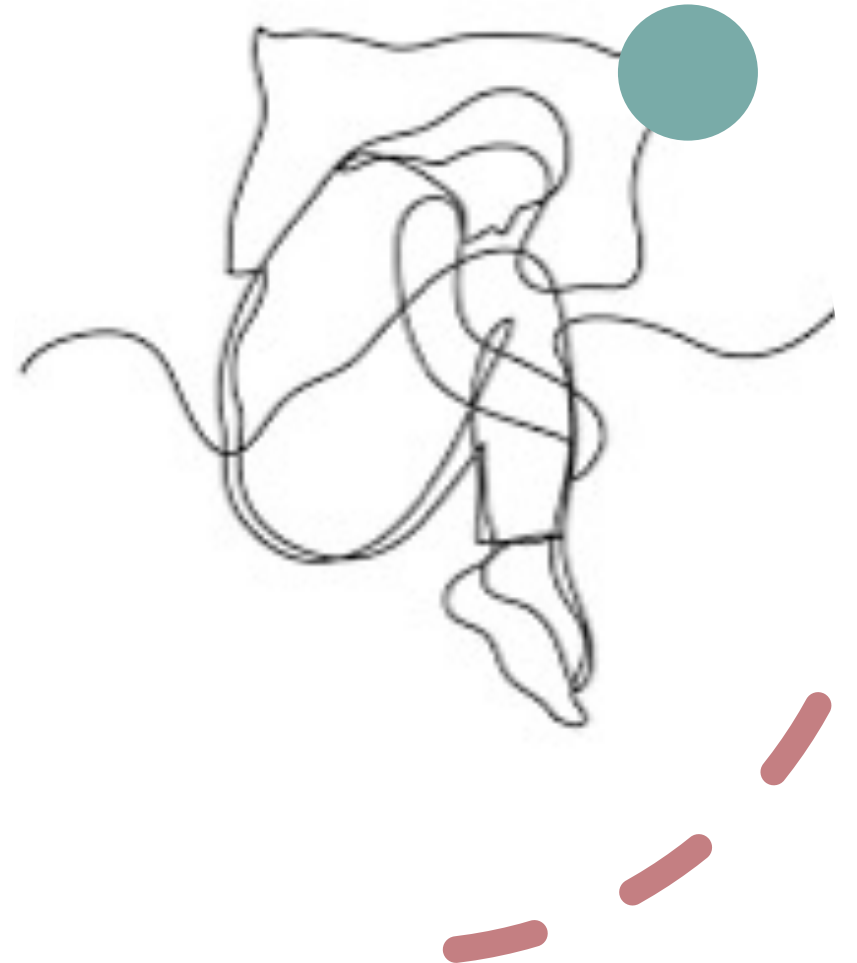


What is depression?

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Introduction

- Depression, or **Major Depressive Disorder** as it is formally known, is considered 2nd leading cause of disability worldwide
- It is **associated with other health conditions too**, such as heart disease, and increases risk of suicide
- Almost **1 in 10 people** in the UK will experience depression at some point in their lifetime
- **Mixed depression and anxiety** is the most common mental health condition in the UK (**7.8%** prevalence rate)
- Depression has a major **impact on functioning**, including occupational and social



Key symptoms (ICD11 & DSM 5)

Low Mood
Loss of interests or pleasure
Fatigue/Low Energy

For at least
2 weeks

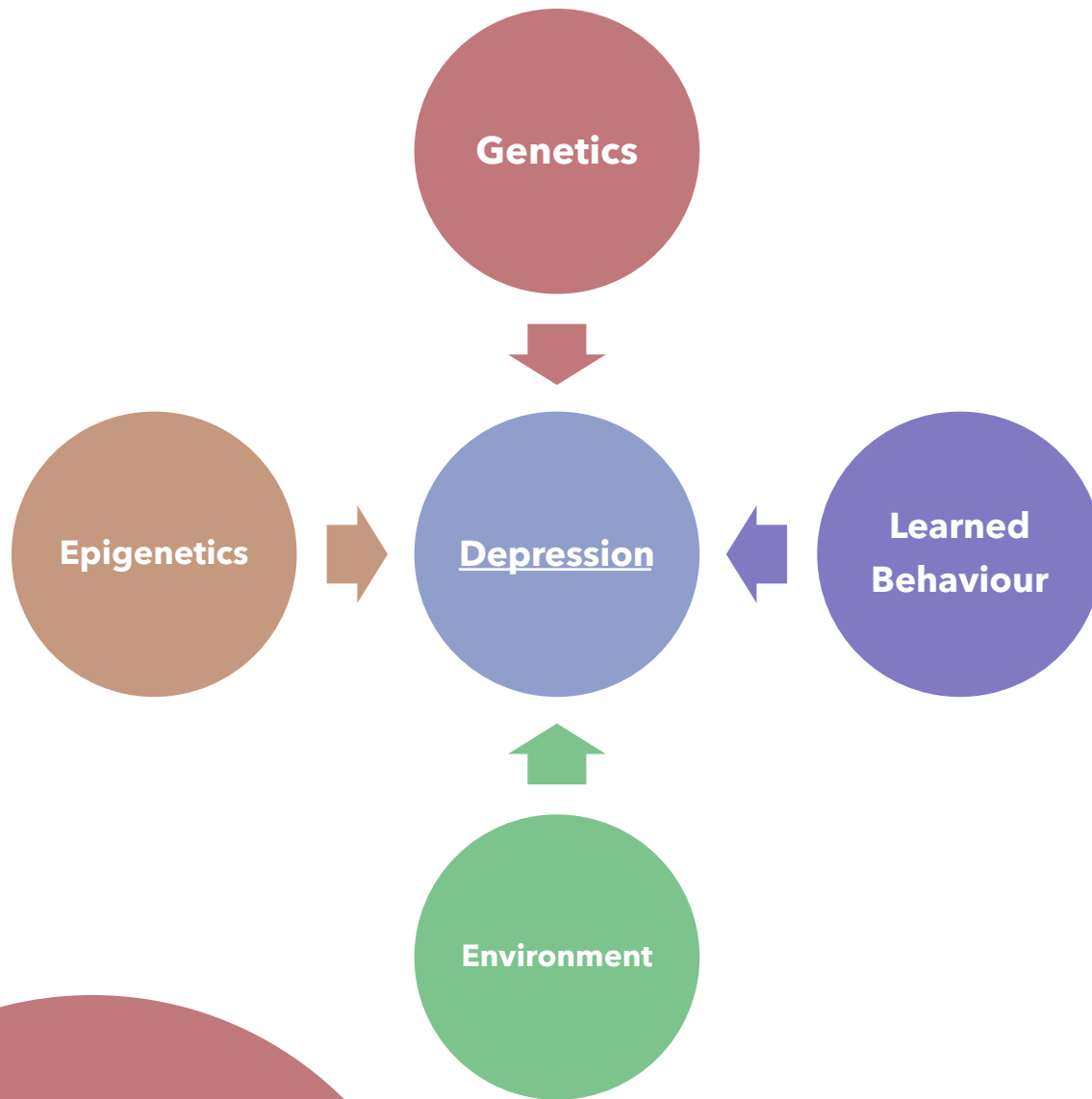
Also look out for:

- Changes to sleeping patterns
- Changes to appetite
- Lack of motivation
- Poor concentration or indecisiveness
- Agitation or slowing of movements
- Hopelessness or low self-confidence
- Feelings of guilt or shame
- Thoughts of death



Causes

- A number of factors contribute to the onset of depression. These include:



- **Biological & genetic risk**
demonstrated through twin studies, with heritability rates around 30-50%
- **Environmental factors**
which include stressful life events, early life events & chronic adversity
- **Gene-environmental interaction**
it is likely that a number of factors play a role in how likely someone is to develop depression. It isn't nature versus nurture, but **nature AND nurture**

Diagnosis



- The **GP** is the first point of contact in cases of suspected depression
- The GP will **examine** the patient and carry out any necessary **investigations**. E.g., an underactive thyroid may resemble symptoms of depression, so the GP may want to rule this out first
- If the patient meets the **diagnostic criteria** (as per ICD 11, DSM 5) for depression, the GP will refer the patient for talking therapy and may prescribe an antidepressant
- In some instances, the GP **may refer** the patient to a **psychiatrist** for further assessment
- A psychiatrist can carry out a **risk assessment**, which is like an interview to assess whether the patient is at risk of causing harm to themselves or to others
- A psychiatrist can also perform a **mental state examination**, which is like another interview to help formulate an accurate diagnosis

Treatment

- The GP will likely refer the patient for **counselling or talking therapy**
- According to NICE guidelines, **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is first-line**
- Usually counselling or CBT is **sufficient in mild cases**
- In moderate-to-severe cases, **medication is used too**
- Antidepressants act on certain receptors in the brain that help to **alleviate symptoms** of depression
- **Combination therapy** (CBT + antidepressants) prove effective
- **Exercise** and **social activities** really do help as well!



Useful information for further support

- Make an **appointment** with your **GP**
- Contact **Samaritans (116 123)** or **Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87)**
- Contact a **Mental Health helpline or support group**
(<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>)
- If an **emergency**, contact **NHS 24** on **111**
- For **more information** about depression, visit the following **NHS website**: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/clinical-depression/>

