



1 in 3 people who have had a stroke will experience depression. Depression is a mood disorder that can occur following an injury to the brain. Depression can affect how an individual thinks, feels or behaves and it can influence daily life functioning.

What you should know

- ✓ The risk of depression is greatest in the first 3-6 months after a stroke, but a person can develop depression years later
- ✓ Signs of depression can be mistaken for the effects of stroke or aging. Signs of depression can also be overlooked or missed when a person has difficulty speaking or thinking
- ✓ Depression is treatable. The most common treatments for depression are medications and counselling. The person may need to try several medications before finding one that works best. Medications may take several weeks to work before you notice a change
- ✓ If not treated, depression can affect a person's ability to enjoy activities, participate in their own care and interact with family and friends. Depression can impact quality of life
- ✓ Risk of depression increases at times of change, so a person should be monitored when moving into a new setting such as a long-term care home

Smart Tips - Always follow the care plan!

Recognize



Look for Signs of Depression:

- Feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless
- Feeling sad, anxious, irritable or angry
- Loss of interest and withdrawal
- Appetite, weight and sleep pattern changes
- Headaches, chronic pain, digestive problems
- Fatigue/lack of energy
- Memory, concentration problems, confusion and slow thoughts
- Difficulty making decisions
- Thoughts of death, dying or suicide

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Encourage and Support



- Add structure to the day by keeping a consistent routine
- Encourage the person to participate in activities they enjoy
- Find activities that can make the person feel better, such as exercise, social activities, listening to music, or reading
- Encourage the person to share their feelings. Listen actively and offer support
- Always be hopeful when working with a person with depression

Educate



- Educate the person and their family about depression and the impact that stroke can have on mood
- Learn how to communicate with people who have aphasia (See Smart Tips for Stroke Care - Communication After Stroke: Aphasia)

Seek extra support

- ✓ Look for signs and symptoms of depression and report any differences in mood to your team
- ✓ All people showing signs and symptoms of depression should be referred to a health care provider with the ability to assess and treat depression
- ✓ Ensure that you get help immediately if a person is talking about death, dying or suicide

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