What you should know

- Depression is an illness characterized by persistent sadness and a loss of interest in activities that you normally enjoy, accompanied by an inability to carry out daily activities, for at least two weeks.
- In addition, people with depression normally have several of the following: a loss of energy; a change in appetite; sleeping more or less; anxiety; reduced concentration; indecisiveness; restlessness; feelings of worthlessness, guilt, or hopelessness; and thoughts of self-harm or suicide.
- Depression is common in older people but often overlooked and untreated.
- Depression among older people is often associated with physical conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic pain; difficult life events, such as losing a partner; and a reduced ability to do things that were possible when younger.
- Older people are at a high risk of suicide.
- Depression is treatable, with talking therapies or antidepressant medication or a combination of these.

What you can do if you are feeling down, or think you may be depressed

- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings.
- If you think you are depressed, seek professional help. Your local health-care worker or doctor is a good place to start.
- Keep up with activities that you have always enjoyed, or find alternatives if previous activities are no longer possible.
- Stay connected. Keep in contact with family and friends.
- Eat at regular intervals and get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly if you can, even if it’s just a short walk.
- Avoid or restrict alcohol intake and only take medicine as prescribed by your health-care provider.

REMEMBER:
There is a lot that can be done to prevent, and treat, depression in older age.