



Counselling Workroom

Understanding

Dysthymia & Depression

All of us have unhappy moments, and sometimes such feelings may last for a long period. But what's the difference between feeling unhappy and suffering from a mood disorder? We have often heard of Depression, but have you heard about Dysthymia?

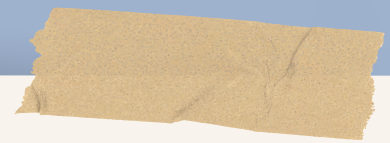
We have invited Dr. Ng Kong Man, a psychiatrist, to explain the differences between the two mental disorders, and he has also shared related treatment methods with us.

What's the difference between feeling unhappy in daily life and having depression?

We can handle or control unhappy emotions in different ways. For instance, if we feel unhappy because we argued with a friend, the unhappiness will fade away once the issue is resolved and the relationship is rebuilt.

However, if one has depression, even though the issue is resolved, the patient will still feel unhappy for a long period and will be unable to control this feeling.





What's the difference between Dysthymia and Depression?

Dysthymia and Depression are both mood disorders, with patients of both experiencing unhappy and depressed states.

Dysthymia Milder symptoms, allowing patients to maintain their daily lives and work more effectively

Feeling depressed for most of the time every day for at least 2 years, along with two or more of the following conditions:

Poor appetite or overeating	Insomnia or hypersomnia	Lack of energy or fatigue
Feelings of low self-esteem	Difficulty concentrating or making decisions	Feelings of hopelessness

Depression Wider variety of symptoms which are typically more severe, thus impacting daily functioning

For at least 2 weeks, having five or more of the following conditions:

Depressed mood	Losing interest in most activities	Weight loss or gain
Insomnia or hypersomnia	Psychomotor agitation or retardation	Lack of energy or fatigue
Feeling of worthlessness	Difficulty concentrating or making decisions	Suicidal ideation or thoughts of death

Depression often accompanies other emotions, such as anxiety, worry, and tension, which can easily lead to restlessness and irritability.

The mood of the patient often fluctuates throughout the day, unrelated to the day's events. For instance, the patient may wake up in the morning in an extremely low mood for no apparent reason.

Additionally, the patient may struggle to feel happiness and may even experience numbness. In severe cases, they lose motivation and are unable to maintain their daily routine and work.



What are the treatments?

Medication

Medications help balance the chemical imbalance in the brain. The side effects of antidepressants, such as nausea, dry mouth, and fatigue, tend to appear quickly, while the therapeutic effects of the drugs take longer to work.

Over time, the side effects will gradually subside, and the medication will take effect. Nowadays, some newer drugs have fewer side effects than older ones, making it easier for patients to adapt.

Remember not to stop taking the medicine suddenly and to take it regularly as instructed by the doctor.



Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

ECT is often more effective for patients with severe depression when medication proves ineffective.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), helps improve patients' negative thinking and behaviour patterns.



In addition, maintaining good daily habits such as keeping a regular routine and engaging in regular exercise can improve the condition.

Exercise increases the level of endorphins in the brain, which induces feelings of happiness, even a quick daily walk can help.

At the same time, the support of family and friends is also important for patients.

How to reduce the chance of relapse?

All mood disorders have the potential to relapse.

Patients should explore various coping methods to reduce the chance of relapse. For example, they could discuss with their doctors about continuing medication to consolidate recovery after their condition has stabilized, or increasing their meetings with counselors to strengthen mental health.

Patients should also monitor their condition after discontinuing the medication. If relevant symptoms reappear, they need to visit the doctor as soon as possible.

 [eduhk.saocs](https://www.facebook.com/eduhk.saocs)  [wecare.wesupport](https://www.instagram.com/wecare.wesupport)

