Warning signs for depression
- Persistent feelings of sorrow, hopelessness and unhappiness often without an identifiable reason which cannot be influenced
- Obvious lack of decision-making ability and reduced concentration
- Anxiety and excessive worries
- Daily mood changes which clear in the evening
- Strong feelings of guilt and inferiority
- Agonising despair with the wish not to live anymore
- Sleeping disturbances
- Loss of sexual interest
- Various physical complaints or pains, e.g. headache, stomach problems or a heavy feeling in the chest

Warning signs for suicidal behaviour
- Previous suicidal behaviour
- Presence of suicidal thoughts
- Preoccupation with death
- Depression
- Feeling isolated
- Increase in substance/drug/alcohol use
- Experiencing sudden changes in mood/behaviour
- Making final arrangements – giving away possessions

Important:
It is easier for the doctor to help you when you tell him/her about both physical and mental complaints!
About 15 – 20 million people in Europe suffer from depression. Although depression is common, it is often not thought to be important by the general public and is also underestimated and misunderstood.

Depression is not an expression of personal failure, but a disorder or condition that can affect anyone, of any age, profession or social background.

Depression often happens to a person who has had no previous experience of depression. Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish from a common depressive mood or a life crisis. Detailed investigation can lead to early detection which is of great importance as the majority of depressed patients can be treated successfully. But if depression remains undetected, the disorder causes unnecessary suffering, which can be harmful to the individual and which could result in suicidal behaviour.

Today, depression can be treated successfully. Due to specific medications and psychotherapy highly efficient treatment methods are available. Unfortunately, they are not used often enough, as depression is still frequently overlooked.

Research shows that in the context of depression, physical changes can occur independently from a concrete cause. Signals of positive feelings become reduced, whereas those of negative feelings are increased. This is the point where antidepressants take effect by adjusting the change so that the depressive symptoms decrease. In order to avoid a recurrent depressive mode, in some cases a continuous and long-term medical treatment may be appropriate.

Psychotherapy or counselling can be helpful for many patients and, with severe depression in conjunction with medical treatment; the individual learns strategies for dealing with his or her problems. Enhancing positive experiences and reducing negative thinking are both very important. Relatives and friends recognising that depression is a serious disorder can offer support to those coping with their depression.

Many people who suffer from depression have an increased risk of suicidal behaviour. The existing high rates of suicide and deliberate self harm (DSH) are regarded to be important indicators for the under-diagnosis and under-treatment of depression. Although effective treatments, such as anti-depressants and psychotherapy are available, only about 10% of depressed patients receive best possible care.

The reasons for the under-diagnosis and under-treatment of depression range from:

- shortcomings at the primary care level (lack of knowledge concerning diagnosis and treatment of depression)
- underestimation of the severity of the disorder by individuals (depression is not perceived as a real disorder)
- the depressed individual himself/herself (hopelessness or compliance problems)

Support Reference Card

Samaritans
(Call Save) 1850 60 60 60
Providing befriending 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to those passing through personal crisis

Suicide Helpline
(Freefone) 1800 742 745
Health Service Executive – Southern Area
A help-line daily 9:00am – 10:30pm for people who are feeling suicidal or are concerned about someone. People can ring the number and talk, in complete confidence, to someone who will listen and offer help and support.