



# Decreasing the risk of falls by identifying and treating depression in the elderly

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# Role of Care Partners

- Pay attention to all aspects of your Seniors
- Allow seniors be as independent as they can be
- Don't dismiss symptoms
- Encourage seniors to express themselves
- Encourage seniors or/and their families to seek help



# Falls In Older Adults

- Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among adults aged  $\geq 65$  years<sup>1</sup>
- Every second of every day in the United States an older adult falls, making falls the number one cause of injuries and deaths from injury among older Americans<sup>2</sup>
- One-third of elderly people develop a fear of falling after an incident fall<sup>4</sup>



CREATED USING  
**BwToon**

Falls cost a lot to the individual, to their family and to the nation

Adjusted for inflation, the direct medical costs for fall injuries are \$31 billion annually<sup>3</sup>



Some  
Changes  
Associated  
with  
Normal  
Aging

Sarcopenia ( loss of muscle mass and strength)

Changes in types of muscle fibers

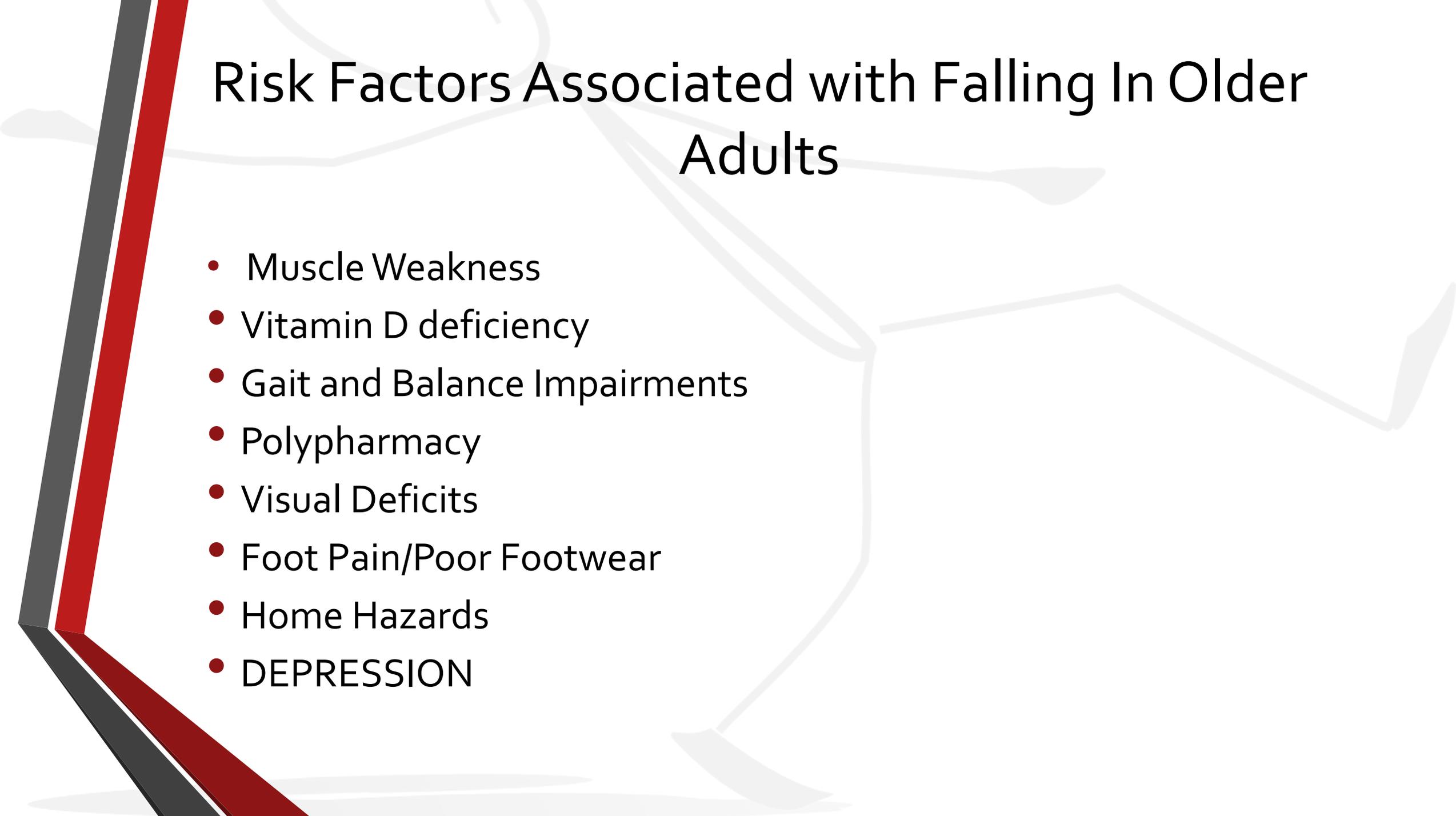
Decreased reflexes

Degenerative joint diseases

Decreased vision

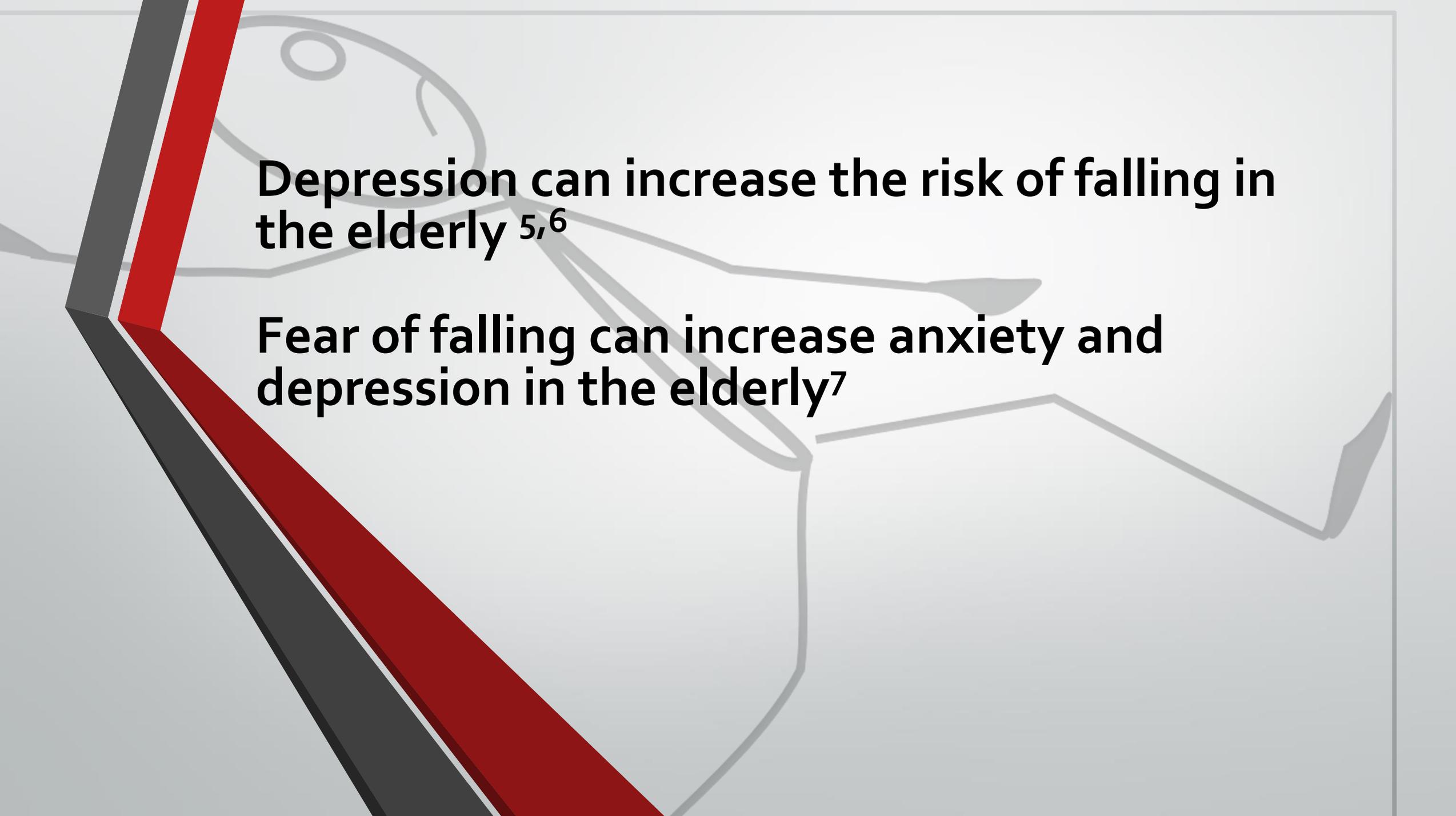
Decreased Hearing

Decreased sensation in feet



# Risk Factors Associated with Falling In Older Adults

- Muscle Weakness
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Gait and Balance Impairments
- Polypharmacy
- Visual Deficits
- Foot Pain/Poor Footwear
- Home Hazards
- DEPRESSION

A stylized illustration of an elderly person falling. The person is depicted in a light gray outline, with their body angled downwards as if in mid-fall. A large, dark gray, angular shape, possibly representing a hand or a piece of furniture, is positioned on the left side, appearing to be the cause of or the point of impact for the fall. A prominent red diagonal stripe runs across the scene, intersecting the falling figure. The background is a light gray gradient.

**Depression can increase the risk of falling in the elderly <sup>5,6</sup>**

**Fear of falling can increase anxiety and depression in the elderly<sup>7</sup>**

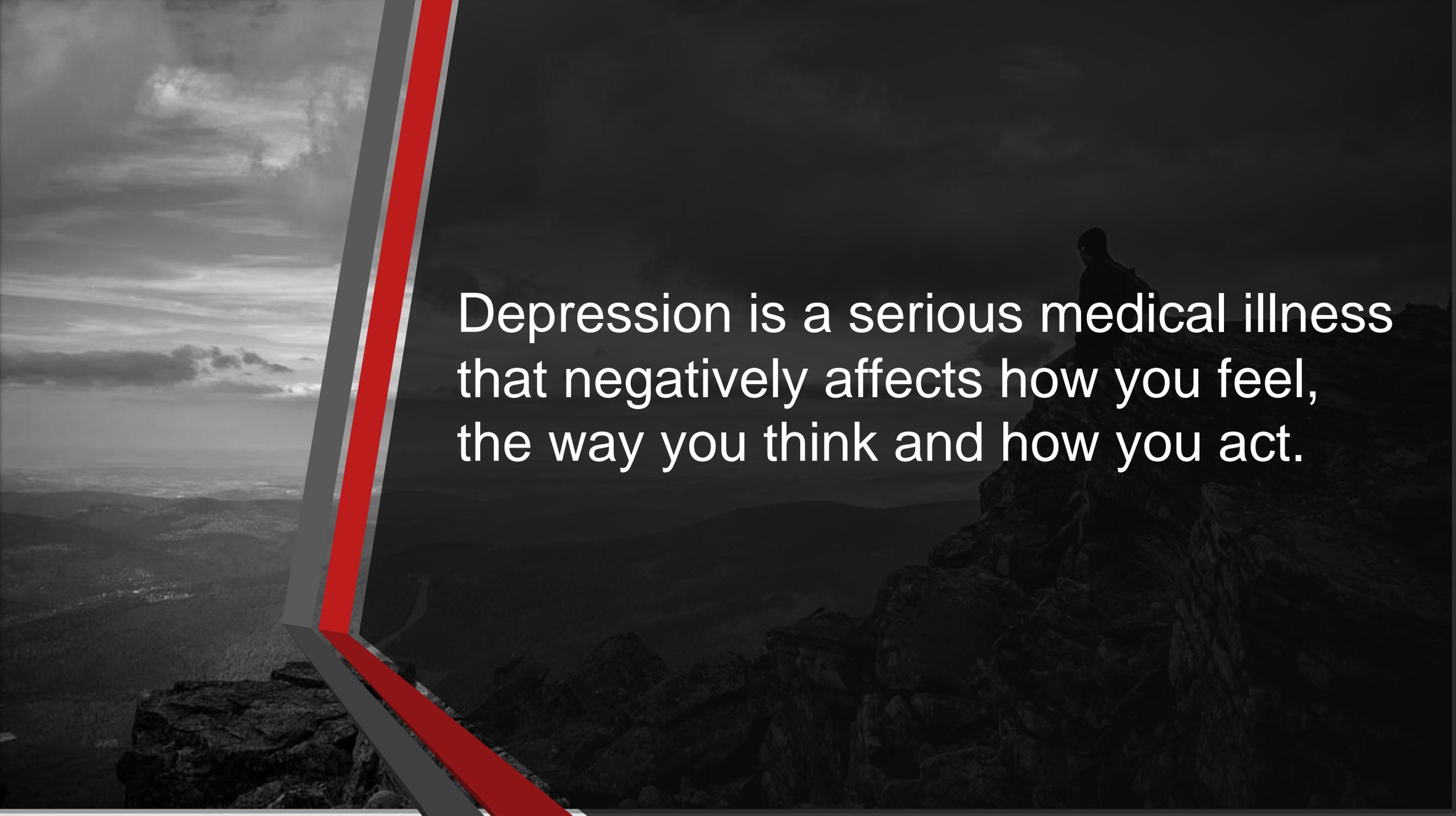


What is depression?

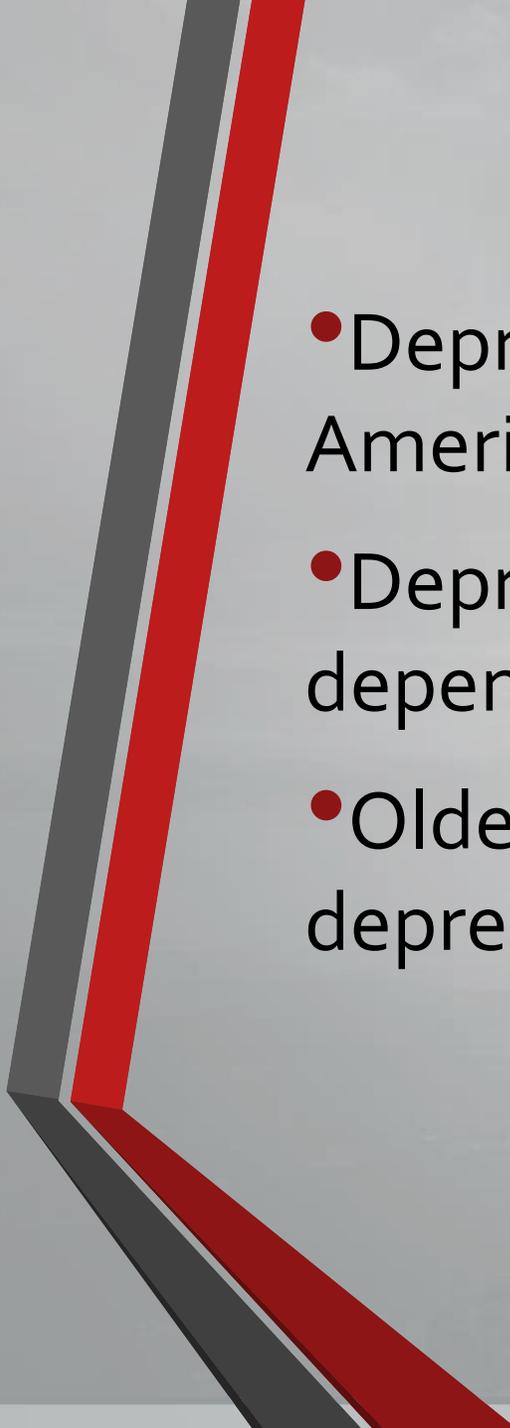
Depression is not the same as feeling  
sad sometimes

Depression is not a normal part of  
aging



A person is silhouetted against a dark, overcast sky, sitting on a rocky cliff. The background shows a vast, hazy landscape with rolling hills and a distant horizon. A prominent red and grey geometric shape is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Depression is a serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act.

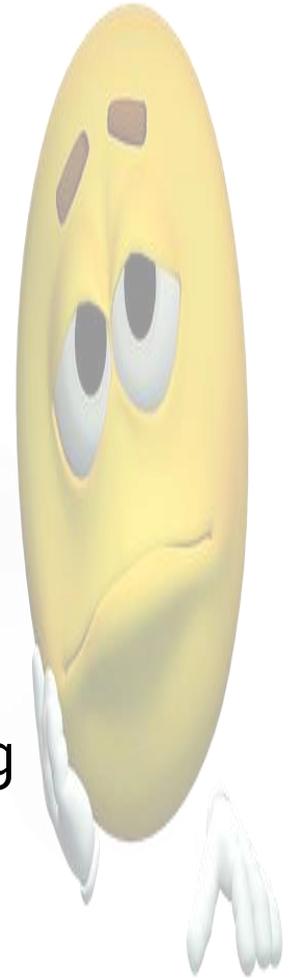
- 
- Depression affects more than 6.5 million of the 35 million Americans over 65 years old
  - Depression in older adults is closely associated with dependency and disability
  - Older women are twice as likely as men to suffer from depression



**Depression is a medical  
condition that can be treated**

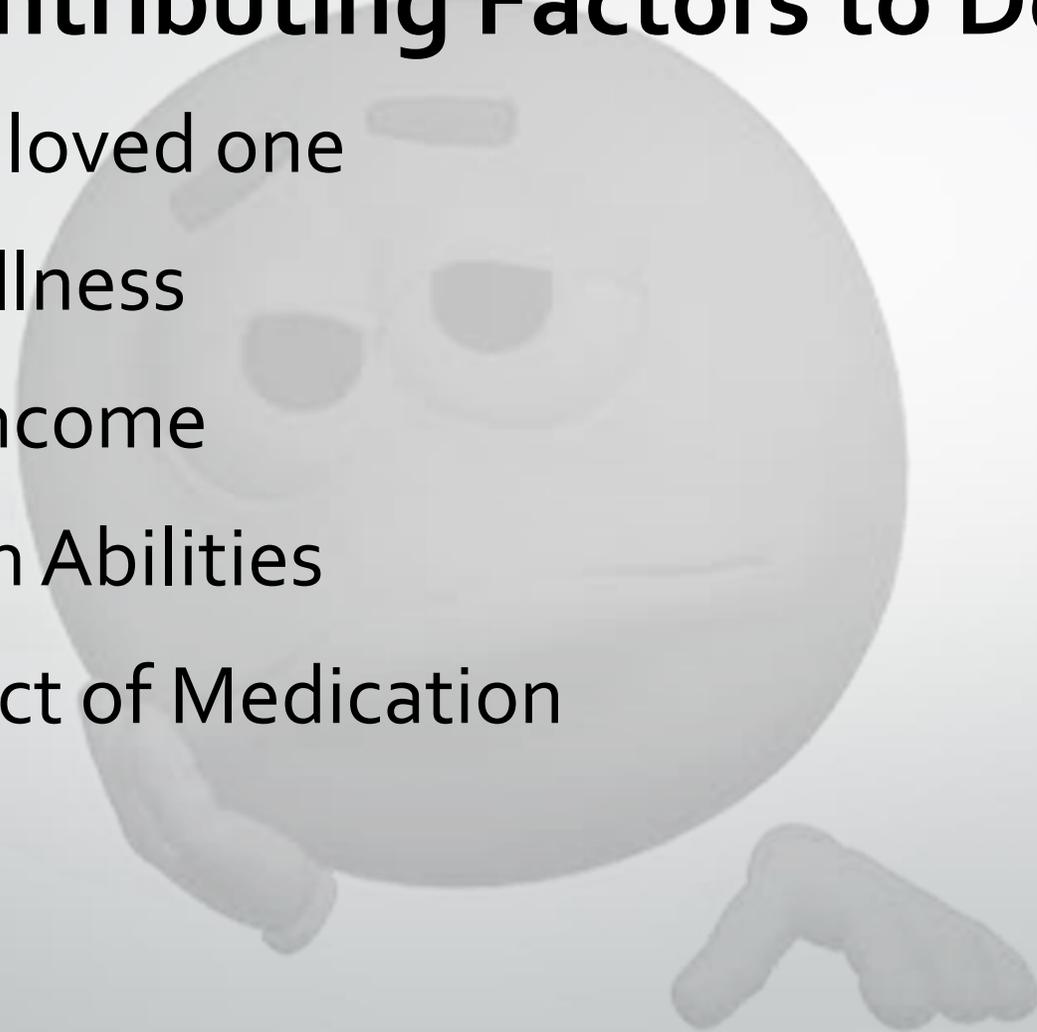
# Signs of Depression

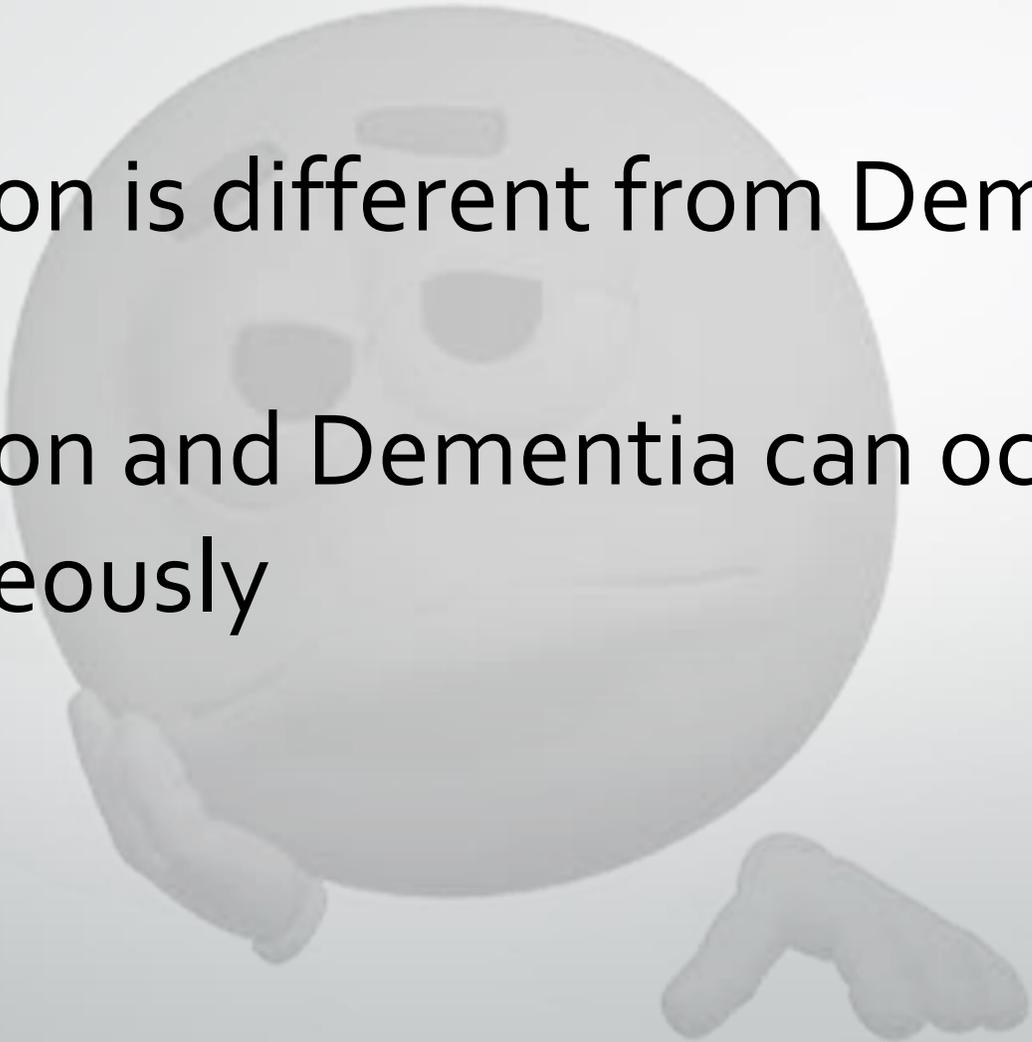
- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies or activities
- Decreased energy, fatigue, or being “slowed down”
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts
- Restlessness or irritability
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and/or that do not ease even with treatment



# Contributing Factors to Depression

- Loss of a loved one
- Chronic Illness
- Loss of Income
- Decline in Abilities
- Side Effect of Medication





Depression is different from Dementia

Depression and Dementia can occur  
simultaneously

# Signs of Dementia

- Memory Loss
- Difficulty with planning and problem solving
- Difficulty with familiar tasks
- Confusion with time or place
- Difficulty with understanding images/perception
- Difficulty with speaking and writing
- Misplacing items
- Exhibiting poor judgement
- Withdrawal from work and social activities
- Changes in mood and personality

# Differences Between Depression and Dementia

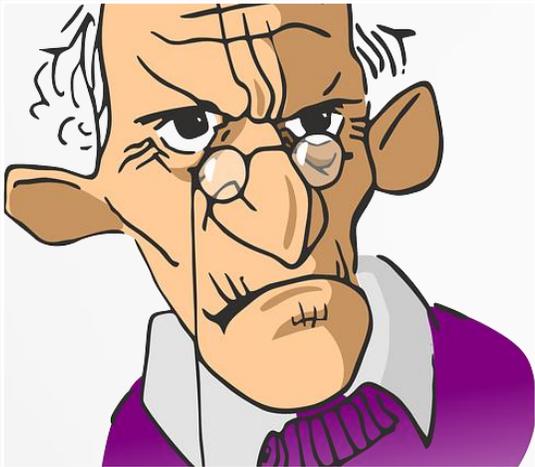
## Depression

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## Dementia

- Memory Loss
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Depression + Changes associated with aging = Increased Fall risks



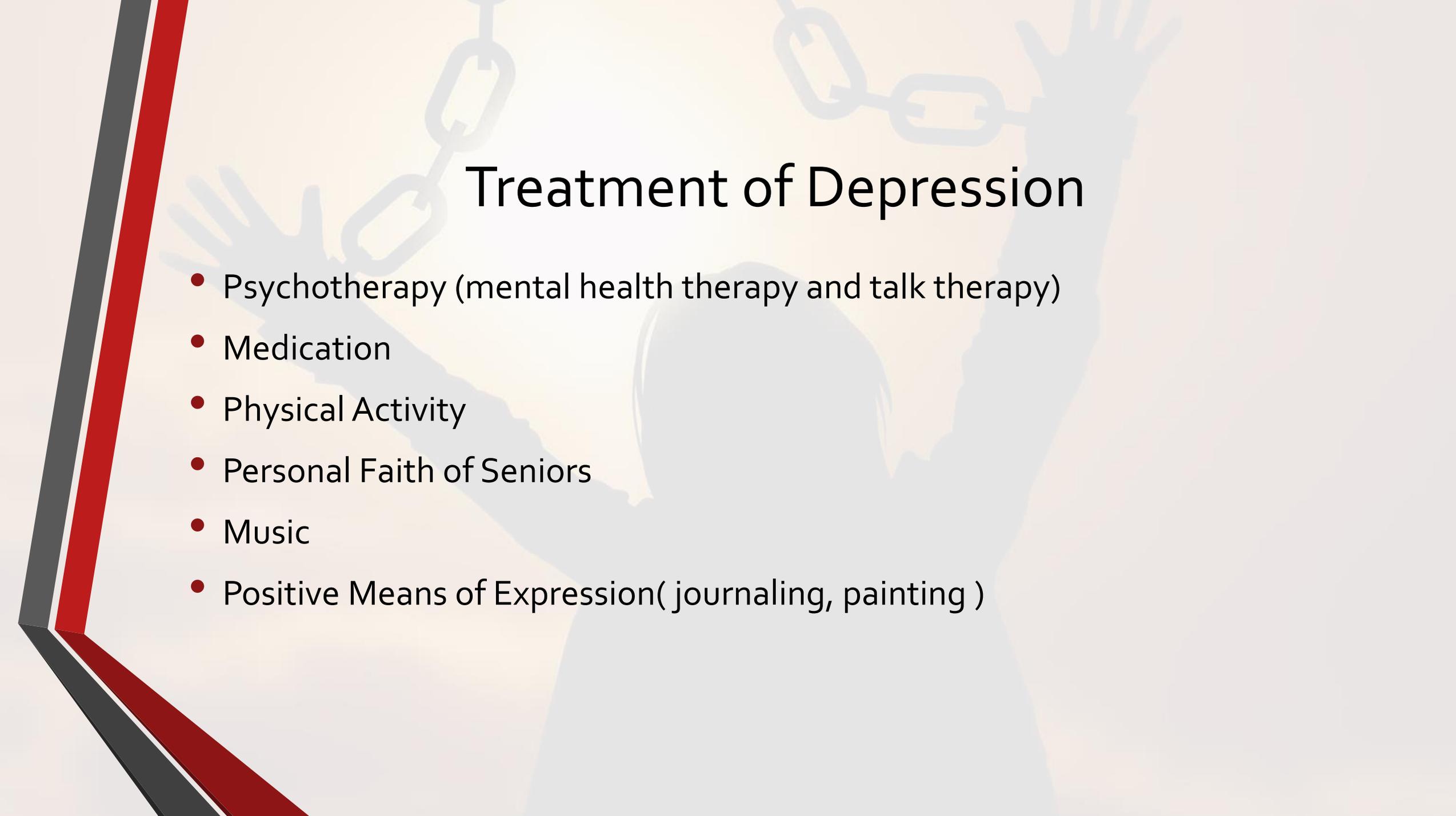
Seniors



Depression

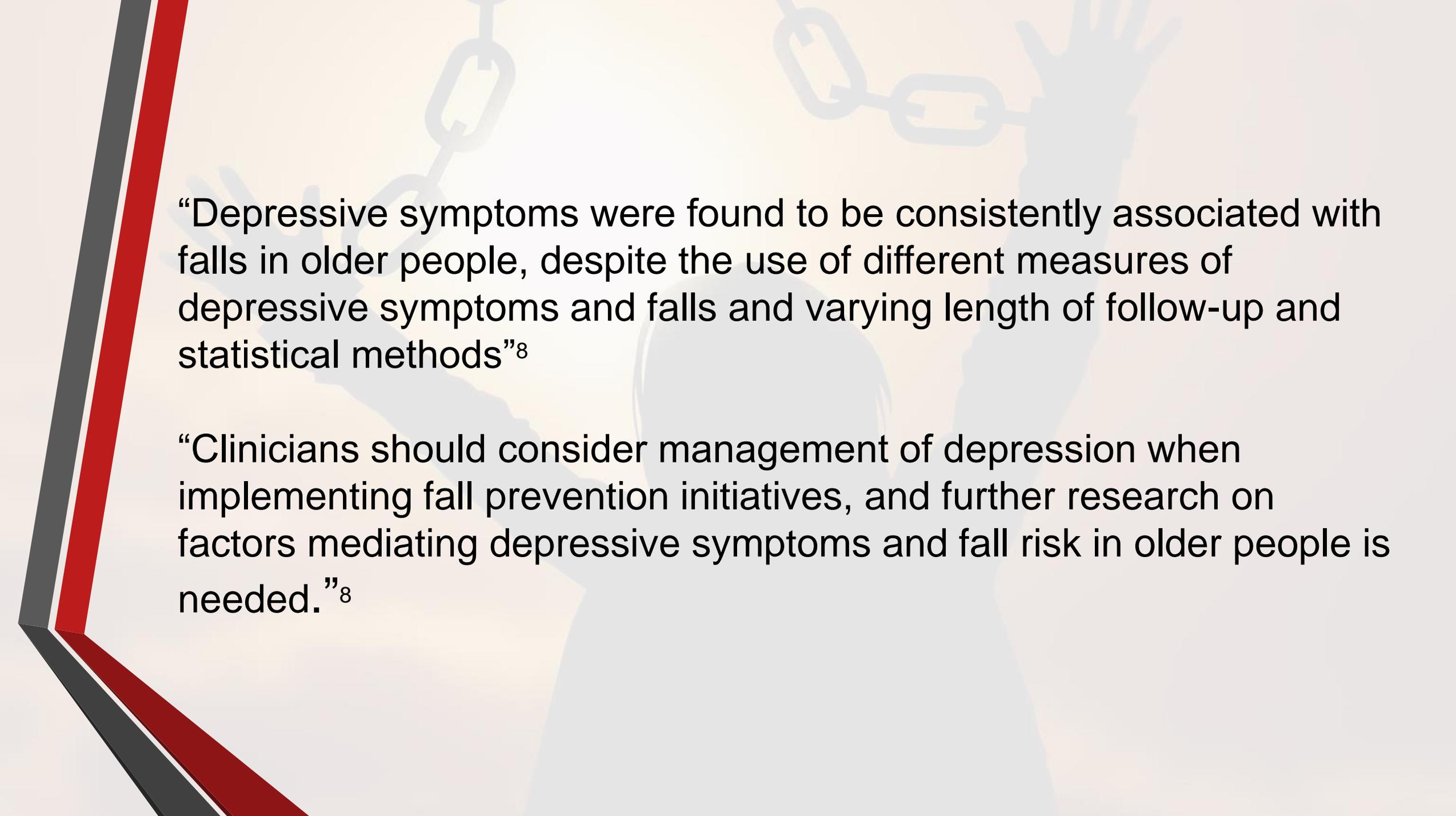


↑ Fall Risks

A background image showing a person's silhouette breaking chains. The person is in the center, with their arms raised and hands reaching up, breaking through a chain of metal links. The background is a light, warm gradient. On the left side, there are decorative diagonal stripes in red and dark grey.

# Treatment of Depression

- Psychotherapy (mental health therapy and talk therapy)
- Medication
- Physical Activity
- Personal Faith of Seniors
- Music
- Positive Means of Expression( journaling, painting )

The background features a faint, light-colored graphic of a chain with a hand silhouette. The chain is composed of several links, and the hand is positioned as if holding or interacting with the chain. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, with a focus on the text content.

“Depressive symptoms were found to be consistently associated with falls in older people, despite the use of different measures of depressive symptoms and falls and varying length of follow-up and statistical methods”<sup>8</sup>

“Clinicians should consider management of depression when implementing fall prevention initiatives, and further research on factors mediating depressive symptoms and fall risk in older people is needed.”<sup>8</sup>



Have you come across any senior who you are/were concerned about?

What did you do about it?



# Practical ways to help seniors who we are concerned about ?

- Suggest activities they can participate in including volunteer opportunities
- Plug them in to support groups
- Encourage them to speak to their families about their concerns
- Encourage to speak to their primary care provider on how they feel
- Encourage families to listen their loved ones and not argue with them
- Where applicable and legal, discuss concerns with families



# References

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# Resources

1

National  
Alliance on  
Mental Health

2

Centers for  
Disease control  
and Prevention

3

National  
Institute of  
Mental Health

4

Psychiatric  
Association  
American

5

Alzheimer's  
Association



*Thank you*

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