

Getting Help

Feeling sad and having little energy is not a normal part of getting older. Left untreated, depression can make older adults more susceptible to heart disease or other illnesses.

Fortunately, there is help available in your community.

Talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider about how you feel. Ask them, “Is it possible I’m feeling this way because I am depressed?”

There are many different types of help available, including grief or other counselling to help you deal with concerns, social supports, and medications. Good nutrition and a little exercise can also help fight off “the blues”.

Be good to yourself.



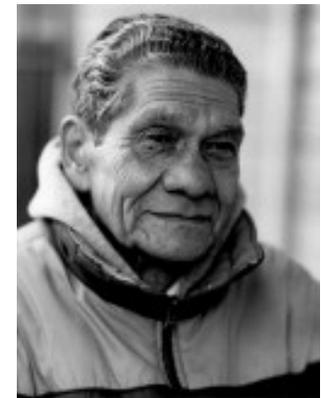
Remember, depression seldom gets better by itself.



MY COMMUNITY RESOURCE

MY COMMUNITY
RESOURCE

Older Adults and Depression



*“THERE IS NO AGE
LIMIT ON DEPRESSION”*

What is Depression?

Any one can become sad at some point in their lives. But being “down in the dumps” over a period of weeks may be a sign of depression.

People’s brains contain special chemicals called “serotonins” (ser-o-tone-ins) that help keep them feeling happy and content. If these chemicals get too low or out of balance, the person can become depressed.

We don’t know why, but women are more susceptible to depression than men.

Depression often runs in families.

People who have experienced depression earlier in life may see it come back in later life.

Being depressed is not a matter of not having enough will power.

Did You Know?

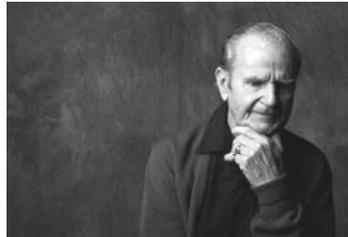
Some medications for arthritis, high blood pressure or heart disease can make a person feel depressed?



Do Older Adults Become Depressed?

Depression can happen at any age. About 1 in 20 older adults experience severe depression, and as many as 1 in 5 may experience less severe forms.

Major changes in life such as job loss, retirement, death of a spouse, losing long time friends, changes in health, or even moving to a new place can often lead to depression. So can some health conditions, such as heart disease, serious breathing problems, stroke and Parkinson's disease, or ongoing pain that is not being treated adequately.



What are the Signs of Depression in Later Life?

An older person who is depressed may lack energy, or may feel sad or anxious. These are not normal feelings at any age.

Other signs of depression in older adults include feeling life is hopeless or empty. Older adults who are depressed

may have

- trouble concentrating, or
- memory difficulties.

Sometimes depression in later life shows up in a person as loss of appetite, having trouble sleeping or physical concerns such as chest pains or stomach problems.

Alcohol and Depression

Some older adults drink to try to escape feeling lonely or feeling sad and blue. It may temporarily lift their spirits.

However, even if you drink a little, it may make the depression worse.

Drinking tends to negatively affect the way a person thinks. Alcohol also affects the body’s ability to produce and regulate the necessary brain chemicals such as serotonin that keep people feeling mentally well.

For some people, reducing the amount of alcohol they drink helps improve the depression.

Many medications used to treat depression are unsafe if you drink alcohol. Talk with your doctor about which medications can be taken if you do drink.

