

## Depression and Older Adults

Depression is common and it changes the way one sees the world. Someone may feel “a little down,” or might feel dark and gloomy, or may lose interest in common activities. Depression may be mild and last for a few days, or it may be long-term and debilitating, creating an inability to take care of oneself.

There are many reasons people experience depression. Experts believe that natural chemicals in the body affect core mood and pain symptoms. A situation, an event, or a medication can trigger depression, or a physical illness can lead to depression. Sometimes there is not an apparent reason.

Depression has both emotional and physical symptoms. These vary from person to person and no one has all of the symptoms listed below. Depression is diagnosed when multiple symptoms are extensive enough to impair one’s social and work life. People who experience symptoms almost everyday and for most of the day should contact their doctor.

- Trouble concentrating
- Sleeping a lot, or sleeping too little
- Change in appetite or weight
- Feeling pain (headaches, joint pain, abdominal pain and other pain)
- Being restless, or really slowed down
- Panicked feelings
- Alcohol or other substance misuse
- Feeling tired or fatigued most of the time
- Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy
- Feeling worthless
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling sadness or emptiness most of the time
- Having a hard time with decision making
- Lots of thinking about suicide or death
- Loss of hopes and dreams
- Tearfulness
- Brooding and going over and over events or ideas
- Irritability

Treatment for depression depends on the symptoms. For mild depression, eating well, getting enough rest and keeping active by doing some things every day that you used to enjoy and doing activities with other people will often be enough to help you feel better. If not, then:

- Seek medical help-there are medicines for depression.
- Seek mental health-talking therapy (counseling), your doctor can help you.
- The best recovery occurs when counseling and medication are combined.

People recover from depression and go on to lead lives that are fulfilling, hopeful and happy again. If you are feeling depressed, treatment is effective and you can feel better.

