

Older Adults and Mental Health

Overview

It's just as important for an older person with symptoms of depression to seek treatment as it is for someone younger. The impact of depression on health in older adults can be severe: much research has reported that depression is associated with worse health in people with conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. Depression can complicate the treatment of these conditions, including making it more difficult for someone to care for him- or herself and to seek treatment when needed. In older adults, depression may be disregarded as frailty, or it may be viewed as an inevitable result of life changes, chronic illness, and disability. Recognizing the signs and seeing a health practitioner is the first step to getting treatment, which can make a real difference in someone's quality of life.

Warning Signs

- Noticeable changes in mood, energy level, or appetite
- Feeling flat or having trouble feeling positive emotions
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Difficulty concentrating, feeling restless, or on edge
- Increased worry or feeling stressed
- Anger, irritability or aggressiveness
- Ongoing headaches, digestive issues, or pain
- A need for alcohol or drugs
- Sadness or hopelessness
- Suicidal thoughts
- Feeling flat or having trouble feeling positive emotions
- Engaging in high-risk activities
- Obsessive thinking or compulsive behavior
- Thoughts or behaviors that interfere with work, family, or social life
- Unusual thinking or behaviors that concern other people

Mental disorders can be treated...

If you are unsure where to go for help, ask your family doctor or visit [NIMH's Help for Mental Illnesses](#) webpage. Communicating well with your health care provider can improve your care and help you both make good choices about your health.

Read about [tips to help prepare and get the most out of your visit](#)

For additional resources, including questions to ask your health care provider, visit the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)

If you or someone you know is in a crisis, get help immediately. You can call 911 or the [National Suicide Prevention Line](#) at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.

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National Institute of Mental Health

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