

# Seniors and Depression

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# Depression

The changes that often come later in life- retirement, death of loved ones, changes to health status can lead to depression.

Depression prevents you from enjoying life like you used to.

Depression impacts your energy, sleep, mood, appetite, and physical health.

Depression is NOT a part of normal aging!!

Depression is treatable.

# Seniors

- Depression is not a character flaw
- Can happen to anyone, at any age, no matter what your accomplishments are.
- You do not have to live with depression
- The right treatment and support can allow you to feel better and live a happy and vibrant life.
- It is important to share how YOU are feeling!

# Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- Sadness
- Fatigue
- Losing interest in previously enjoyed hobbies
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Reluctance to be with friends or leave
- Weight loss/appetite change
- Sleep Disturbances
- Loss of Self-worth
- Increased use of alcohol/drugs or other substances
- Fixation on death or suicidal thoughts

# Depression without sadness?

## How is this possible?

- Low motivation
- Feelings of hopelessness/helplessness
- Anxiety and worry
- Cognitive changes
- Low energy and interest
- Unexplained aches
- Slowed movement/or pacing
- Irritability
- Loss of interest in socializing and hobbies
- Neglecting in personal care ( skipping meals, neglecting personal

# Causes of Depression in Seniors

**Health Problems-** illness and disability

**Loneliness & Isolation** - loss of driving, moving

**Reduced sense of purpose-** change of identity due to retirement

**Fears** – Death & dying, anxiety over \$

**Recent Bereavements** – death of friends, family

# Is it Grief or Depression?

- Grief and depression share symptoms.
- Grief is a rollercoaster of emotions-variety of good and bad days, able to feel pleasure at times
- Depression evokes feelings of despair and emptiness which are constant
- There is no timetable for grieving-if it continues it **MIGHT** be depression.

# Illness and Depression in Seniors

- Medical Conditions
- Parkinson's disease
- Stroke
- Heart Disease
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Medical Conditions
- Thyroid Disorders
- Vitamin B12 deficiency
- Dementia
- Alzheimer's Disease
- Lupus
- Multiple Sclerosis



# Prescription Medications that can worsen or cause Depression

- Blood Pressure meds
- Beta-Blockers
- Sleeping Pills
- Tranquillizers
- Calcium Channel blockers
- Medications for Parkinsons' disease
- Ulcer medications
- Heart drugs containing Reserpine
- Steroids
- High-cholesterol drugs
- Painkillers and Arthritis drugs
- Estrogens

# Further Risk Variables

- Family history of mood disorder
- Living alone, social isolation
- Numerous, compounded losses over a short period of time
- Historical depressive episodes.
- Substance over-use.

# Alcohol and Depression

- It can be tempting to use alcohol to deal with physical and emotional pain of aging.
- While alcohol might make you feel better for the short-term, it can cause problems over time.
- Alcohol makes symptoms of depression worse and can impair your brain functioning.
- Alcohol interacts negatively with meds, interferes with sleep and impairs the quality of rest/sleep

# Dementia and Depression

- Dementia and Depression share many similar symptoms.
- Both present with memory issues, sluggish speech, low motivation and interest, poor concentration.
- It can be difficult to tell the two apart.
- It is important to see your doctor if you are concerned about either of these matters.

# Is it Depression or Dementia?

- Symptoms of Depression
  - Mental decompensation is rapid
  - Oriented to person, time, place
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Language and motor skills
- Symptoms of Dementia
  - Mental decline happens slowly – over years & months
  - Confused and disoriented
  - Difficulty with Short term memory
  - Writing, speaking skills

# Self Help for Depression

- Isolation and inactivity can make depression worse!
- **EXERCISE** – activity has mood-boosting effects. Start small and gradually increase.
- **SOCIALIZE** – join social groups, limit the time you are alone and isolated
- **SLEEP** – Aim for 7-9 hours/night

# Self Help for Depression

- **DIET** – choose healthy foods, limit “junk”
- **PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES YOU ENJOY**-hobbies or enjoyable pastimes
- **VOLUNTEER** – Helping is a way to bring meaning and purpose into your life
- **LEARN A NEW SKILL** – something to spark your interest
- **THERAPY** – group or individual based

# Key Messages about Suicide

- Older adults have high rates of suicide.
- With help, many suicides can be prevented.
- Learn about warning signs.
- By talking about suicide WILL NOT make the person suicidal.
- Seek professional help.
- A person who is suicidal can get better with appropriate help-this is not a life sentence.



# Risk Factors for Suicide

- Plan, intent for suicide ( feasible)
- Previous attempts
- Recent losses
- Mental health challenges
- Emotional/psychological pain
- Medical illnesses
- Social/financial stressors
- Demographic risk factors (male, widowed etc.)

# Counselling and Therapy for Seniors

- Supportive Counselling- peer counselling, can ease feelings of hopelessness and depression. Can help to find new meaning in life.
- Therapy – Helps you to work through issues, heal from losses. Can help to change patterns of negative thinking and develop positive coping skills.
- Support Groups- connecting with others experiencing the same challenges. Safe place to share experiences and advice.

# Medications for Depression

- Please consult your physician about the most suitable intervention for your situation.
- Medications offered will vary on intensity and severity of depression.
- Important to be compliant to medications as prescribed by your physician-never stop without consultation.
- For treatment resistant depression a hospitalization might be required.

# Helping a depressed or suicidal friend

- Get help for friend and connected to a professional.
- Be encouraging and supportive.
- It is not your job to “fix” the depression, being a listener is enough.
- Stigma exists around mental health – important to be transparent about how one is feeling.

# Community Services

- Here 24/7 1-844-437-3247 (CMHA)
- Family Doctors
- Specialized Geriatric Services ( CMHA)
- Social work clinicians able to refer to Geriatrician or Geriatric Psychiatry as appropriate
- Seniors at Risk
- CCAC