



SENIOR HEALTH

Depression

HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND OVERCOME IT

Depression is not a normal part of aging, but it's a common problem. Depression in the elderly is often dismissed or not detected because it's attributed to the physical, social and economic difficulties of aging. If left untreated, it can lead to a poor quality of life and even suicide.

CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

life changes

loss of a loved one

genetic factors

*side effect of high blood pressure
and arthritis medications*

*side effect of combining some
medicines*

thyroid problems

stroke

arthritis

WARNING SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- irritability
- excessive crying
- aches and pains that don't respond to treatment
- sleeping problems
- eating problems (loss of appetite, weight gain or loss)
- difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- thoughts of death
- suicide attempts
- a persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood
- loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities, including sex

SENIORS AND SUICIDE

The suicide rate in older adults is 50 percent higher than in any other age group. Suicide is rarely caused by one single event. Suicidal people often show warning signs. They may have had a recent loss or expect one. They may become preoccupied with death or take unnecessary risks. Some may give away prized possessions or acquire a weapon.

If you know someone who is contemplating suicide, or you're having those feelings yourself, get professional help immediately. Never dare someone to carry through with a suicide threat.

GETTING HELP

Depression will not just go away, but it is a treatable disorder. Treatments can include medication, counseling, diet modification and exercise. See your doctor for treatment options and a counseling referral. Community mental health centers often provide affordable treatment.

WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF

- Talk about your feelings with supportive family members and friends.
- Get involved in an activity that you enjoy.
- Avoid isolating yourself.
- Keep your daily routine.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Avoid drinking alcohol.