

Depression is Not a Normal Part of Growing Older

Depression is a true and treatable medical condition, not a normal part of aging. However older adults are at an increased risk for experiencing depression. Depression is not just having "the blues" or the emotions we feel when grieving the loss of a loved one. It is a true medical condition that is treatable, like diabetes or hypertension.

How Do I Know If It's Depression?

Someone who is depressed has feelings of sadness or anxiety that last for weeks at a time. He or she may also experience:

- Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- Loss of interest in activities once pleasurable
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Feelings of guilt or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Thoughts of suicide or attempts



Tips to Combat and Prevent Depression in Older Adults

Get Enough Sleep. When you don't get enough sleep, your depression symptoms can get worse. Aim for somewhere between 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.

Stay Connected. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it challenging for many to get together. It's important for our emotional well-being to connect with friends and family so reach out by phone, video, email, social media or even write letters!

Exercise. Physical activity has powerful mood-boosting effects. In fact, research suggests it may be just as effective as antidepressants in relieving depression.

Learn a New Skill. Pick something that you've always wanted to learn, or that sparks your imagination and creativity. Check out your local Council on Aging for new activities.

Maintain a Healthy diet. Avoid eating too much sugar and junk food. Choose healthy, nourishing foods such as whole grains, lean proteins, fruits and vegetables.

Talk to Someone. If you are thinking of harming yourself, talk to someone who can help. Call a trusted family member or friend, call 911, or make an appointment with your doctor. Or call the toll-free, 24 hour national Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255).

<http://www.theyucatanimes.com/2015/05/depression-in-older-adults-and-the-elderly-one-of-the-biggest-issues-of-todays-health/> <http://www.cdc.gov/aging/mentalhealth/>