



StayHealthy

Health Information from the Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Does someone you care for seem sad all the time?

Feeling sad or blue from time to time is normal, but it should fade away in days. If a person continues to feel sad for a long time and/or loses interest in things they used to love, they may be experiencing depression.



Depression is a treatable medical condition caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. It can last for months or even years if not treated. Research shows that 10 to 20 percent of older adults suffer from depression, and 46 percent of homebound adults are depressed.

Symptoms of Depression

A depressed person may have some or all of these symptoms:

- Persistent sadness and anxiety
- Loss of interest in activities
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Significant changes in appetite or weight
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Feeling inappropriate guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Lack of concentration or indecision
- Unexplained or aggravated aches and pains
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Common Triggers for Depression

The imbalance in brain chemistry can be brought on by:

- A surgery or recent medical diagnosis
- Cognitive decline or chronic pain
- Living alone or being isolated
- Reduced sense of purpose and loss of identity
- Anxiety over financial or health problems
- Loss of a spouse, family member, friend or pet

How to Manage Depression

If you think that the person you care for may be experiencing symptoms of depression, it is important to tell their physician or nurse.

To help find relief, there are treatments available like cognitive behavior therapy, medications, participation with local community organizations and support from family and friends. Depression is not a normal part of aging and can be managed for a healthier life.



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