

JUST HAVING A BAD DAY...OR?

Depression Is A Mood Disorder That Can Take Joy Out Of Life

We have good days, when we are happy and in a good mood. We also have days when we are not so happy, or in a bad mood. When the bad mood days string together for a period of time (2 weeks or more) it may be a sign that depression is creeping into one's life.

For 6.5 million of the 35 million Americans who are age 65 or older, depression is an issue. This mood disorder affects the way seniors feel about themselves and others, as well as the way they think about things in general. It takes joy out of their lives, and it exacts a toll on their health and their relationships.

On the bright side, with appropriate treatment and support, the majority of seniors who suffer with depression can feel better. A key to making this happen is for the senior, a family member or the doctor to realize the problem is more than just "having a bad day."



A disinterest in cooking or a lack of appetite could be warning signs that a happy cook or a good eater are struggling with the feelings of depression.

RISK FACTORS

Even though it is not a normal part of aging, there are certain factors that increase a senior's risk of suffering with depression. They include:

- ◆ Gender - being female, especially if unmarried or have lost their spouse.
- ◆ Living alone, social isolation.
- ◆ Lack of a social support network.
- ◆ Stressful events or lifestyle.
- ◆ Physical conditions and medical problems.
 - ➔ Medications and/or combinations of medications can lead to or magnify depression.
- ◆ Previous history of depression or a family history of depressive disorders.
 - ➔ Past attempt(s) at suicide.
- ◆ Fear of death.
- ◆ Severe or chronic pain.

SIGNS & WARNINGS

Being aware of red flags can help a senior or their family to take action before a depression problem escalates. Changes to look for include:

- ◆ Loss of interest, especially in activities and hobbies that were once enjoyed.
- ◆ Fatigue, exhaustion, move in slower manner.
- ◆ Reluctance to socialize, increased isolation.
- ◆ Loss of self-worth, being more demanding.
- ◆ Weight loss and/or the loss of appetite.
- ◆ Memory problems or confusion.
- ◆ Delusions or hallucinations.
- ◆ Suicidal thoughts or a fixation on death.
- ◆ Sleeping problems - too much or too little.

Note: Seniors often do not recognize depression's symptoms, or even claim to feel sad. Instead, they may complain about low motivation or pain, or show symptoms of anxiety or irritability.

(Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness, WebMD.com, HelpGuide.org, National Institute of Mental Health)



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