

## If left untreated, serious depression can lead to suicide.

Adults over 65 have twice the rate of suicide of other populations. In addition to the previously outlined warning signs of depression, watch for the following signs of suicide:

- Statements of hopelessness — “It’s not going to get better, and I just feel like giving up.” or “I just want to go to sleep and not wake up.”
- Giving things away.
- If the older adult says things like, “I feel like a burden, useless”.
- Loss of interest in things they once cared about.
- Stockpiling pills.
- Unusual visiting or calling people they care about--saying good-byes.

Take it very seriously and don’t believe that a person can just ‘snap out of it’ or that a person is too old to be helped.

### Don’t be afraid to ask...

“Do you ever feel so badly that you think of hurting yourself?”

“Do you have a plan?”

If there is any hesitation in the answer or the answer is yes to either question, then immediately call a doctor or take the person to an emergency room. Do not let the person alone, and make sure there are no weapons in their house. Offer to help them get help, then do it!

Remember, depression is a treatable illness and treatment can be more successful if family members participate in the older adult’s care.

# Depression

## in Older Adults



## Myths

*Depression is a normal part of aging.*

*People who talk about suicide won't really do it.*

*Everybody gets depressed, don't worry about it, you'll get over it.*



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## For Families

The Stigma that is often associated with a mental illness can prevent people from getting help. Your willingness to talk about depression with your older family member can be the first step in getting him/her help and improving the quality of his/her life. Don't try to minimize problems and convince a person that it's not that bad. Reassure the person that depression/ anxiety is a treatable illness. A complete medical examination should be performed to rule out the presence of other medical conditions.

There are many losses a person may experience as he/ she gets older, but typically, ordinary grieving will respond to comfort and support. It is normal for a person to feel some of the following symptoms from time to time, but experiencing several or more for more than two or three weeks may indicate the presence of depression.

## For the Older Person

This checklist is provided as a tool to help you talk with the doctor about your concerns.

Unusual complaints of aches and pains (back, stomach, arms, legs, head, chest).

Change in appetite, weight increase or decrease.

Blurred vision.

Inability to concentrate.

Easily irritated.

Feeling that you are a burden to others.

Occasionally, heart pounds, can't catch your breath, and feeling tingly. Feeling like you might pass out. The feeling passes in seconds, but afraid it will happen again.

Feeling little joy or pleasure after visiting with friends or not wanting to go out with friends anymore.

Not taking care of appearance.

Inability to sleep, or waking between 1:00—5:00 AM and not being able to get back to sleep.

An overall sadness, apathy or withdrawal.

Irritability, mood swings or constant complaining; nothing seems to make the person happy.

Talk of worthlessness, not being needed anymore, excessive and unwarranted guilt.

Frequent doctor visits without relief in symptoms; all tests come out negative.

Alcoholism, which can mask an underlying depression.

People with serious illnesses, such as stroke, cancer, diabetes or heart disease are at greater risk of getting depressed. Treatment for depression will help them improve their overall health.

