

seniors and depression

Information you need to know



We all feel down or sad from time to time. But when the feeling won't go away and you start to lose interest in the things you enjoy you could be experiencing symptoms of depression.

“About seven per cent of people over the age of 65 show some symptoms of depression. Around two per cent experience moderate or severe depression and around five per cent experience mild depression. The moderate or severe forms are much more common among elderly people living in care homes (eight per cent), or those who have dementia (10 per cent). Depression in people over 65 seems to be less common than it is in younger groups.”

(BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information, 2013)

Depression is a serious illness, especially for seniors. Seniors who have recently been moved to a care home or hospital, spend a lot of time alone, are experiencing health problems, or have recently lost a loved one may be at increased risk of depression.

The earlier it is detected, the easier it can be to treat. The most important thing to remember is that **depression is treatable**. If you are exhibiting symptoms of depression, book an appointment with your physician immediately.

“Remember the doctor needs to know all the information in order to properly treat your symptoms.”

Withdrawing
from family and
friends can be a
sign of
depression.

Here are some of the symptoms of depression:

- Feeling unhappy most of the time
- Worrying a lot or feel anxious or panicky
- Getting restless and irritable
- Feeling life is pointless and not worth living
- Getting lonely or bored
- Crying a lot for no apparent reason
- Not caring how you look
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Feeling tired even when you're not doing much
- Finding it a struggle to do simple chores
- Having difficulty remembering things
- Finding it hard to make decisions
- Dwelling on things that happened in the past
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Worrying that you are seriously ill
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Losing confidence in yourself
- Experiencing a loss of appetite or weight
- Having thoughts of harming yourself

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms make an appointment to visit your doctor. Make sure you explain any and all symptoms that you have noticed; often one of the reasons depression goes unnoticed and untreated is because we are worried about telling our doctor exactly how we are feeling. Remember the doctor needs to know all the information in order to properly treat your symptoms.

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms make an appointment to visit your doctor. Make sure you explain any and all symptoms that you have noticed; often one of the reasons depression goes unnoticed and untreated is because we are worried about telling our doctor exactly how we are feeling. Remember the doctor needs to know all the information in order to properly treat your symptoms.

Consider joining a support group to be around other people who are experiencing similar things. There are support groups for people who experience depression or other types of mood disorder symptoms – reach out for the help of people who will understand and not judge you for how you are feeling.

Consider joining a social club. Depression symptoms can make us feel like we don't want to do anything, even getting out of the house can be hard. Even if you don't feel like it, try to spend time in social environments. Make some new friends or re-connect with old ones. Isolation can make you feel alone with your problems and that no one cares about what you. Make efforts to connect with people.

Consider some form of exercise. Many seniors' centers offer walking groups and low-impact physical activity and there are many research studies that say exercise should be part of a treatment plan for depression.

Before you start any exercise program make sure you see your doctor to find out if the exercise you want to do is safe for you.

Below are some resources for more information.

Mood Disorders Association of BC www.mdabc.net, 604.873.0103, toll free 1.855.282.7979

BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information, www.heretohelp.bc.ca

Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health www.ccsmh.ca, 416.785.2500 ext. 6331

Crisis Centre Seniors' Distress Line 604.872.1234, www.crisiscentre.bc.ca



Mood Disorders association of British Columbia

1450 – 605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3

T 604.873.0103 F 604.873.3095 E info@mdabc.net www.mdabc.net