

Michigan Psychiatric Society

Information and referrals to psychiatrists in your area
(517) 333-0838

Michigan Psychological Association

Information and referrals to psychologists in your area
1-800-270-9070
(517) 347-1885
www.michpsych.org

Michigan Alliance for the Mentally Ill

Family support and self-help groups
1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
www.nami.org

Hopeline Network

Crisis person available
1-800-Suicide (784-2433)

BlueHealthConnection

Program educates members about their health.

For BCN members:

1-800-637-2972
MiBCN.com

(click on BlueHealthConnection)

For BCBSM members:

1-800-775-2583
bcbsm.com

(click on Members then BlueHealthConnection)

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

Information on aging and mental health
(301) 654-7850
www.aagponline.org

depression



Depression... Real. Common. Treatable.



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Depression in Older Adults

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Facts About Depression

Depression is not a normal part of aging. In fact, most older people feel satisfied with their lives. Nonetheless, of the 35 million Americans age 65 and over, an estimated two million have a depressive illness. It can be serious and can even lead to suicide.

Depression often co-occurs with other serious illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, and Parkinson's disease. Because many older adults face these illnesses as well as various social and economic difficulties, health care professionals may mistakenly conclude that depression is a normal reaction to these problems — an attitude often shared by patients themselves. These factors together contribute to the under diagnosis and under treatment of depressive disorders in older people. Depression can and should be treated when it co-occurs with other illnesses. Untreated depression can delay recovery from or worsen the outcome of these other illnesses.

Treatment for Depression

Both antidepressant medications and short-term psychotherapies are effective treatments for late-life depression. Existing antidepressants are known to influence the functioning of certain neurotransmitters in the brain. The newer medications, chiefly the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), are generally preferred over the older medications, including tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), because they have fewer and less severe potential side effects. Both generations of medications are effective in relieving depression, although some people will respond to one type of drug, but not another.

Certain types of short-term psychotherapy, particularly cognitive-behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy, are effective treatments for late-life depression. In addition, psychotherapy alone has been shown to prolong periods of good health free from depression. Combining psychotherapy with antidepressant medication, however, appears to provide maximum benefit. In one study, approximately 80 percent of older adults with depression recovered with combination treatment. The combination treatment was also found to be more effective than either treatment alone in reducing recurrences of depression.

Ask Yourself If You Feel:

- Nervous or empty
- Guilty or worthless
- Very tired and slowed down
- You don't enjoy things the way you used to
- Restless and irritable
- Like no one loves you
- Like life is not worth living

Or If You Are:

- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Eating more or less than usual
- Having persistent headaches, stomachaches or chronic pain

These may be symptoms of depression, a treatable medical illness.

But your doctor can only treat you if you say how you are really feeling.

Depression is not a normal part of aging.

Talk to your doctor.

Further Information:

National Mental Health Screening Project

For a free online depression screening, go to www.depression-screening.org/

Mental Health Association in Michigan (MHAM)

For free information on depression
(248) 647-1711
www.mha-mi.org/

National Mental Health Association NMHA Information Center

Free materials on a variety of mental health topics, and referrals to local organizations
1-800-969-NMHA

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Information on patient support groups
1-800-826-3632
www.dbsalliance.org