

# Integrated Regional Falls Program



## Depression and Older Adults

North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN

**Mental health problems are NOT a normal part of aging...**

Many people think that mental health problems are just a normal part of aging. This simply isn't true. Difficulties with mood, thinking and behaviour are not an inevitable part of aging. Nor are they signs of personal weakness. They are usually signs that something is wrong that requires attention from a health care professional.

Older adults that have changes in their mood, thinking, and behaviour, might not be aware of the changes in themselves. They might misunderstand the changes that are happening, or even be ashamed that they're developing "mental health problems." Their family may also misunderstand and think that these changes are part of normal aging. They might not know how to help or consider the changes as typical aspects of their relative's personality.



### What is Depression?

Depression is more than having a bad day once in a while or feeling a little sad or "blue." Depression can be described as having feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest or enjoyment in activities that you usually like to do and feeling this way for a couple of weeks or longer.

Depression among older adults is often associated with physical conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic pain; difficult life events, such as losing a partner; and a reduced ability to do things that were possible when younger.

Did you know that up to 1 in 5 seniors have symptoms of depression?

### Symptoms of Depression

Check off the symptoms that you have and show this checklist to your health care provider.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling sad                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulties thinking and concentrating                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less energy and feeling tired            | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems sleeping (too much or not enough)               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not feeling well, having aches and pains | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling agitated, restless and/or sluggish               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling guilty or worthless              | <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughts of suicide or death                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in appetite and weight           | <input type="checkbox"/> No interest in or pleasure from things you used to enjoy |

## Treatment

Depression can be treated in different ways. The type of depression, how severe it is, and the wishes of the older adult will all help determine the best treatment.

Treatment can include counselling and therapy, medication, and improving your lifestyle and social supports. Combinations of these treatments may give the best results. Your health care provider can explain your options and help you choose the treatment that's best for you.



Think you might have depression? Get help from a health expert! No family doctor? There are other options: visit a walk-in clinic, hospital, pharmacist or local health centre.

### Important!!!

\*\*\* If you (or someone you know) are thinking of hurting yourself or ending your life, call 911 now, or go to the hospital emergency room\*\*\*

## Falls and Depression

Did you know? Being depressed increases the chances of having a fall. In fact, older people with a symptom of depression have about **DOUBLE** the risk of falls. Falls themselves can result in depression. Depression can result in a person being less aware of their surroundings, walking more slowly and having problems with coordination and all of these effects can contribute to falls. Depression should be evaluated and treated for prevention of falls.



### References

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