

Depression in the Elderly

Symptoms of Depression in the Elderly

Generally, the symptoms of depression in the elderly are similar to those in younger adults. However, certain symptoms are more common and less common in the elderly than in other age groups:

- The elderly often do not complain of sad or depressed mood
- Elderly people often experience depression as physical symptoms
- Anxiety is a more common feature of depression in the elderly and may be more obvious than a depressed mood
- Forgetfulness and confusion often occur because of depression in the elderly

Causes of Depression in the Elderly

Depression in the elderly may often be triggered by life events. Grief and bereavement, loss of health and independence, death of friends and social isolation, and financial concerns can often trigger depressive episodes in the older population.

Recognizing Depression in the Elderly

Too often, depression in the elderly is dismissed as being normal or part of the aging process, leading to months or years of unnecessary suffering. The following symptoms may be suggestive of a depressive illness:

- Persistent sadness that does not lift with happy experiences
- Lack of interest in activities and hobbies that are normally enjoyed
- A loss of interest in friends and socializing
- Guilt and self-blaming
- Marked pessimism about the future
- The appearance of anxiety and physical symptoms

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