

February 2020



# Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living

## Understanding Depression in Seniors

Due to so many different types of mental health problems, there is not a “fix all” button. Mental health disorders can be difficult for both the individual as well as family and caregivers. Having a good understanding of the mental health disorder and knowing how to manage it, can make all the difference in everyday life.

Depression is a very common mental health disorder, especially in seniors. Depression can be different in everyone. Depression is defined as a mood disorder with many symptoms. Depression can effect a person physically, mentally and socially. Physical impairments may include avoiding physical movements, self-care and body pains (headaches, back pain and upset stomach). Some may lose sleep and avoid eating. Mental impairments may also include feeling down and hopeless, constant mood swings, and trouble focusing and organizing thoughts. Social impairments are behaviors such as avoiding social contacts with others (especially close friends and family), excessive time watching television and/or internet use. It is common for seniors to have more symptoms of depression during the winter months due to weather and getting dark outside at a much earlier time.

Though depression is very common, it can be managed with appropriate care. If you are suffering from depression please seek medical care and be open with your physician.

Your physician may refer you to a therapist/counselor and prescribe medication. It is also important to focus on a healthy diet and exercise regimen. Routines help you stay on track. Adequate nutrition can help make you feel better, especially on days you are feeling down.

Proper nutrition should consist of 3 well-balanced meals throughout the day. The meals should include a meat/non-meat protein source, dairy, a vegetable, a fruit and a whole grain. Water should be consumed with each meal and throughout the day to avoid dehydration. Avoid eating fried foods and high in sugar content. These foods can cause weight gain.



Talk with your healthcare providers regarding a physical activity routine. Choose an activity that you are excited about and enjoy doing. Participating in physical activity that you do not enjoy will only lead to quitting and giving up. Examples of physical activity are: walking; chair exercises; dancing; light weight lifting; swimming; yoga; and cycling. Exercise routines should be 30 minutes a day for 5 days a week. However, the 30 minutes does not have to be all at one time. You can do 5-10 segments until you are able to build up longer stretches over time.

While working through depression, it is important to stay connected with family, friends and communities in which you are involved. Being open with these individuals can help you combat your depression. These relationships are beneficial when you have large tasks and need help. These relationships will also give you an opportunity to engage with other people and get you out of your routine. A support system (that also includes your medical team) will work together to ease the symptoms of depression.

#### References:

- [https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=vBADrXPd&id=2A986F41D9AA09F3DFC33752F243E0698CDF8066&thid=OIP\\_vBADrXPd5p7bo-T\\_mK1m3wHaFj&mediaurl=https%3a%2f%2ftechniquescenter.files.wordpress.com%2f2016%2f10%2fmmental\\_health\\_wordcloud.jpg&exph=768&expw=1024&q=mental+health+&simid=607999873364263891&selectedIndex=72&ajaxhist=0](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=vBADrXPd&id=2A986F41D9AA09F3DFC33752F243E0698CDF8066&thid=OIP_vBADrXPd5p7bo-T_mK1m3wHaFj&mediaurl=https%3a%2f%2ftechniquescenter.files.wordpress.com%2f2016%2f10%2fmmental_health_wordcloud.jpg&exph=768&expw=1024&q=mental+health+&simid=607999873364263891&selectedIndex=72&ajaxhist=0)
- <https://www.caregiver.org/print/19>
- [https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/mental\\_health.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/mental_health.pdf)
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- <https://newsroom.heart.org/events/february-2020-american-heart-month-and-go-red-for-women>

## Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Department for Aging and Independent Living

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<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dail/Pages/default>

February is Heart Health Month

Be sure to:

1. Know your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers
2. Stop smoking, lose weight, exercise, and eat healthy
3. Know your risk of heart disease
4. Educate friends and family
5. Take medications

As prescribed

#### February Dates:

2nd: Groundhog Day/Superbowl LIV

7th: National Wear Red Day for heart health

14th: Valentine's Day

17th: President's Day

29th: Leap Year