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Causes of Depression in Older Adults and the Elderly

As you grow older, you face significant life changes that can put you at risk for depression. Causes and risk factors that contribute to depression in older adults and the elderly include:

- **Health problems** – Illness and disability; chronic or severe pain; cognitive decline; damage to body image due to surgery or disease.
- **Chronic diseases** – Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, stroke, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, lupus, multiple sclerosis, thyroid disorders, vitamin B12 deficiency and dementia and side effects from their treatment medications.
- **Loneliness and isolation** – Living alone; a dwindling social circle due to deaths or relocation; decreased mobility due to illness or loss of driving privileges; isolation due to hearing and vision deficits.
- **Reduced sense of purpose** – Feelings of purposelessness or loss of identity due to retirement or physical limitations on activities.
- **Fears** – Fear of death or dying; anxiety over financial problems or health issues.
- **Recent bereavements** – The death of friends, family members, and pets; the loss of a spouse or partner.

Source: <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/depression-in-older-adults-and-the-elderly.htm>



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Signs & Symptoms of Depression in Older Adults & the Elderly

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| ❖ Sadness that persists for 2 or more weeks | ❖ Fatigue |
| ❖ Feelings of hopelessness or expressing helplessness | ❖ Sleep disturbances (difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, oversleeping, or daytime sleepiness) |
| ❖ Abandoning or losing interest in hobbies or other pleasurable pastimes | ❖ Lack of motivation and energy |
| ❖ Loss of self-worth (worries about being a burden, feelings of worthlessness, self-loathing) | ❖ Social withdrawal and isolation (reluctance to be with friends, engage in activities and hobbies, or leave home) |
| ❖ Increased use of alcohol or other drugs | ❖ Weight loss or loss of appetite |
| ❖ Memory or concentration problems | ❖ Neglecting personal care (skipping meals, forgetting meds, neglecting personal hygiene) |
| ❖ Unexplained or aggravated aches and pains | ❖ Excessive anxiety and worries |
| ❖ Slowed movement and speech | ❖ Fixation on death; suicidal thoughts or attempts |
| ❖ Irritability or restlessness | |

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