



Live Healthy Georgia- Seniors Taking Charge

September 2009 Newsletter

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Depression and You

Depression is a medical illness in which a person has feelings of sadness, discouragement, and a lack of self-worth.

Are you depressed?

- Are you sad? Tired?
- Have you lost interest in hobbies or other pleasurable activities?
- Have you lost weight?
- Have you lost your appetite?
- Are you fixated on death and suicidal thoughts?
- Are you reluctant to be with friends or to leave the house?

If you answered “yes” to 4 of the 6 questions above, you may be depressed. Be sure to read about ways you can improve your quality of life in this newsletter. ☺



You are NOT the only one!!!

- 8-20% of older community residents show signs of depression.
- Up to 37% of percent of elderly in primary care settings suffer from depressive symptoms.
- More than two million of the 34 million Americans aged 65 and older suffer from some form of depression!

What to do?

Fighting Depression Self-Help:

- Get out of the house and do things
 - Have lunch with a friend
 - Go to the park
 - Go to the hairdresser
 - Go get your nails done
 - Go for a walk outside
- Volunteer your time
- Learn something new
- Take care of a pet
- Keep in touch with loved ones
 - Invite them over
 - Call or email them
- Enjoy a good laugh
 - Listen to a comedian
 - Watch a funny movie
 - Read a comic
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise!



Food & mood may be connected!

Special diets or foods may not ease depression (or put you instantly in a better mood), but they may help as part of an overall treatment for depression. There's increasing research indicating that, in some ways, food and mood are connected.

What to eat to boost your mood?

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grain carbohydrates and fiber (can lower anxiety)
- Protein-rich foods (for alertness and to help concentration)
- Vitamin D (increases serotonin levels in the brain)
- Fatty fish, flaxseed, nuts, and dark leafy greens (contain omega-3 fatty acids, which improve mood)

Meal Ideas:

Use Food to Enhance your Mood

- Spinach salad greens topped with salmon, walnuts, tomatoes, and a low-fat balsamic vinaigrette dressing
- Fruit Salad: combine 4-5 of your favorite fruits in a bowl with a little lemon juice and a pinch of sugar
- Add berries and/or flaxseed to your breakfast cereal



Exercise helps fight depression.

When you exercise, your body releases chemicals that affect how your brain "feels" pain. The chemicals also trigger a positive feeling in the body, similar to that of morphine. For example, the feeling that follows a run or workout is often described as "euphoric." That feeling, known as a "runner's high," can be accompanied by a positive and energizing outlook on life. ☺

Regular exercise has been proven to help:

- Reduce stress
- Ward off anxiety and feelings of depression
- Boost self-esteem
- Improve sleep

Exercise also has added health benefits:

- It strengthens your heart.
- It increases energy levels.
- It lowers blood pressure.
- It improves muscle tone and strength.
- It strengthens and builds bones.
- It helps reduce body fat.
- It makes you look and feel healthy.



RESOURCES:

- <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information/get-info/depression/depression-in-older-adults/depression-in-older-adults>
- http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_elderly.htm
- <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/mentalhealthproblems/depression/depressioninolderadults.aspx>
- Great listing of resources: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/olderadults.pdf>
Department of Foods and Nutrition, The University of Georgia, GA 30602
Division of Aging Services, Georgia Department of Human Resources, Atlanta, GA 30303