



# MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN OLDER ADULTS

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# Depression in Older Adults

- Age is not a risk factor<sup>1</sup>
  - *Chronic health conditions biggest risk factor*
  - *Death of a loved one*
  - *Caregiving*
  - *Significant loss of independence and limitations of activities*
  - *Loss of societal roles*

<sup>1</sup> “Depression in Late Life: Not a Natural Part of Aging.”

<http://www.aagponline.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=depression&category=Foundation> (accessed August 29, 2017).

# Depression in Older Adults: What Should We Look For?<sup>2</sup>

- Unexplained Physical Complaints
- Expressions of Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Worry
- Loss of pleasure
- Confusion
- Memory loss
- Agitation

# Anxiety in Older Adults

- Age is not a risk factor<sup>3</sup>
- Risk factors
  - *Chronic medical conditions*
  - *Overall feelings of poor health*
  - *Sleep disturbance*
  - *Side effects of medications*
  - *Alcohol or prescription medication misuse or abuse*
  - *Physical limitations in daily activities*
  - *Stressful life events*
  - *Negative or difficult events in childhood*

<sup>3</sup>Byers, A. L., Yaffe, K., Covinsky, K. E., Friedman, M. B., & Bruce, M. L. (2010). High occurrence of mood and anxiety disorders among older adults. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 67(5), 489-496.

# Anxiety in Older Adults: What Should We Look For?<sup>4</sup>

- Health anxiety
- Fear of falling
- House boundedness

<sup>4</sup>"Presentation of Anxiety in Older Adults." <http://medicinetoday.com.au/2016/december/feature-article/presentations-anxiety-older-people> (accessed August 1, 2017).

# Treatment

- Therapy
  - *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)*
  - *Problem Solving Therapy (PST)*
  - *Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)*
- Medication
- Complementary and alternative treatment
  - *Stress and relaxation techniques*
  - *Medication*
  - *Yoga*
  - *Acupuncture*

# Barriers to Receiving Help<sup>5</sup>

- Stigma
- Denial of problems
- Failure of professionals to identify the signs and symptoms of mental illness
- Shortage of trained geriatric medical and mental health providers
- Access barriers such as transportation
- Lack of collaboration between primary care, mental health and aging service providers
- Funding issues
- Gaps in services

<sup>5</sup> Institute of Medicine. 2002. *Reducing Suicide: A National Imperative*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Chapter 9  
<https://doi.org/10.17226/10398> (accessed August 2, 2017).



# Overcoming Barriers for Successful Treatment Specific to Older Adults

- Address Stigma

- *Emphasize recovery and recovery focused care*

- *Educational outreach*

- *Community conversations*

- Increase Workforce

- *Geriatric physicians*

- *Geriatric peer specialists*

- *Community-based geriatric outreach workers*

- Promote legislative awareness

- *Increased advocacy*



# Suicide in Older Adults

- Older adults have the highest rate of completed suicide in the U.S.
- Warning Signs of Acute Risk<sup>6</sup>
  - *Threatening to hurt or kill him/herself, or talking of wanting to hurt or kill him/herself*
  - *Looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means, and/or*
  - *Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary*
- Prevention
  - *Optimize function and reduce isolation,*
  - *Restrict access to lethal means, and*
  - *Diagnose and prevent depression.*

<sup>6</sup>American Association of Suicidology, Updated 2017.”

<http://www.suicidology.org/resources/facts-statistics> (accessed August 14, 2017).

# Assistance Resource SW WA

- **Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities of Southwest Washington:**

<http://www.helpingelders.org/contact-us/>

Information & Assistance Program

- **Clark County** 360-694-8144 • 888-637-6060

[Send us a confidential e-mail](#)

*Physical Address: 201 NE 73rd Street, Suite 201 • Vancouver, WA 98665*

*Normal Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.*

- **Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties** 360-577-4929 • 800-682-2406

[Send us a confidential e-mail](#)

*Physical Address: 1338 Commerce Avenue, Suite 309 • Longview, WA 98632*

*Normal Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.*

- **Skamania County** 509-427-3990

[Send us a confidential e-mail](#)

*Physical Address: SW 710 Rock Creek Drive • Stevenson, WA 98648*

*Normal Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.*