

# **Depression in the Elderly**

## **How common is it?**

Depression amongst the elderly is largely underdiagnosed and not sufficiently treated. 15-20% of adults greater than 65 years old have experienced depression. Depression is a major risk for suicide in adults over the age of 65. Older adults make up 15% of completed suicides in the US.

## **Am I or a loved one at risk?**

You or a loved one may be at higher risk if any of these apply.

- Female
- Spend a lot of time alone
- Widowed, divorced, separated
- Uncontrolled Pain
- Not able to sleep at night
- Not functioning as well as before

## **What are the signs?**

- Decreased Mood
- Decreased interest in most activities most of the day, nearly every day
- Increased use of substances (i.e. alcohol)
- Significant Weight Loss or Gain
- Difficulty with Sleep
- Extreme tiredness
- Feelings of Worthlessness and Guilt
- Difficulty Concentrating or Making Decisions
- Thinking about Suicide
- Physical symptoms- pain

## **How can I or my loved one get better?**

### *Lifestyle*

Getting outdoors and getting exercise has been proven to be helpful for mood. Whether it is going walking or gardening, the fresh air can make you feel better!

### *Psychotherapy and Community Resources*

There are a number of counselors both here in the office as well as in the community who you can talk to. There are also phone numbers you can call if you want someone to talk to anonymously. Ask your doctor for a list of counselors in addition to the ones that are listed.

Tarn Martin, Behavioral Health Consultant at Middlebury Family Health

Elderly Services (802-388-3983)

Friendship Line (1-800-971-0016)

### *Medicines*

There are many different medicines for depression that work in different ways and can have different effects. Ask your doctor about which medicine may work best for you.

You may start to feel better within 2 weeks of beginning medication, but it can take 4-8 for the medicine to have its full effect. If you don't start to feel better, ask your doctor, who may be able to increase the dose, or switch you to another medication.

