

# Depression

## Patient Education Module

### **What is Depression?**

Depression is a medical illness. When sadness persists or interferes with everyday life, it may be depression. When feeling 'blah' persists or interferes with everyday life, it may be depression. Depression usually doesn't change in response to different circumstances, good news, or the passing of time. Depression can last months or even years if not treated. Depression is NOT a normal part of aging. It is not the usual response to loss or the physical ailments of growing old.

### **What Are the Symptoms of Depression?**

*Key Symptoms:*

Depressed or sad mood

Decreased interest or pleasure in activities

*Other Symptoms:*

Significant changes in appetite or weight Sleep disturbances

Increased pain and/or Chronic pain

Restlessness or sluggishness

Fatigue or loss of energy

Lack of concentration or indecision

Feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt Thoughts of death or suicide

### **What Causes Depression?**

Depression is a medical illness with multiple causes including biological, psychological, social and medical factors. The symptoms of depression may reflect an imbalance in brain chemistry often brought about by common factors including genetics, stress or loss, or other physical changes co-occurring with medical illnesses such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and Parkinson's disease. Sometimes depression can develop without any obvious cause.

### **How is Depression Treated?**

Depression is treatable. Appropriate treatment, such as medication and psychotherapy, relieves symptoms for most older adults. It is very important for you to be an active participant in your treatment. You can do this by selecting the most appropriate treatment, monitoring your treatment and following-up with your health professional. If people receive proper treatment for depression they will feel more energetic, hopeful, focused and involved in daily activities.