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Older Adult Mental Health

Also called: Senior mental health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act as we cope with life. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, including as we age.

Many older adults are at risk for mental health problems. But this does not mean that mental health problems are a normal part of aging. Studies show that most older adults feel satisfied with their lives, even though they may have more illnesses or physical problems.

Sometimes, however, important life changes can make you feel uneasy, stressed, and sad. These changes could include the death of a loved one, retirement, or dealing with a serious illness. Many older adults will eventually adjust to the changes. But some people will have more trouble adjusting. This can put them at risk for **mental disorders** [https://medlineplus.gov/mentaldisorders.html] such as depression [https://medlineplus.gov/depression.html] and anxiety [https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html].

It's important to recognize and treat mental disorders in older adults. These disorders don't just cause mental suffering. They can also make it harder for you to manage other health problems. This is especially true if those health problems are chronic.

Some of the warning signs of mental disorders in older adults include:

- Changes in mood or energy level
- A change in your eating or sleeping habits
- Withdrawing from the people and activities you enjoy
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling sadness or hopelessness
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Anger, irritability, or aggressiveness
- Having thoughts and memories that you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others

If you think that you may have a mental health problem, get help. Talk therapy and/or medicines can treat mental disorders. If you don't know where to start, contact your primary care provider.

Start Here

- Older Adults and Mental Health [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/older-adults-and-mental-health]
 (National Institute of Mental Health)

Diagnosis and Tests

- 10 Warning Signs Your Older Family Member May Need Help [https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/news%202017-03/10_Warning_Signs_Your_Older_Family_Member_May_Need_Help.pdf] (Administration for Community Living) - **PDF**

Treatments and Therapies

- Mental Health Medications [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)

Related Issues

- Aging Veterans and Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/aging_veterans.asp] (National Center for PTSD)
Also in Spanish [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/spanish/understand/what/aging_veterans_sp.asp]

Specifics

- Anxiety [<https://www.healthinaging.org/a-z-topic/anxiety>] (AGS Health in Aging Foundation)
- Depression and Aging [<https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-aging/about/depression-aging.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Depression and Older Adults [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/mental-and-emotional-health/depression-and-older-adults>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/depresion/personas-mayores-depresion>]
- Easing Depression in Older Adults [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2023/06/easing-depression-older-adults>]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/aliviar-la-depresion-en-adultos-mayores>]
- Loneliness and Social Isolation -- Tips for Staying Connected [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/loneliness-and-social-isolation/loneliness-and-social-isolation-tips-staying-connected>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/soledad-aislamiento-social/soledad-aislamiento-social-consejos-mantenerse-conectado>]

Statistics and Research

- Mental Health of Older Adults [<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-of-older-adults>] (World Health Organization)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.who.int/es/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-of-older-adults>]
- Social Isolation, Loneliness in Older People Pose Health Risks [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks>]  (National Institute on Aging)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Older Adult Mental Disorders [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22mental+disorders%22&aggFilters=ages:older,status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Older Adult Mental Health [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?term=%22mental+health%22&aggFilters=ages:older,status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Tocotrienol-Enriched Beverage Enhances Psychological Well-Being, Antioxidant Defense, and Genomic Stability in... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40647282>]
- Article: MovingTogether: a randomised controlled trial of a mental-health-informed, digital health promotion... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40627691>]

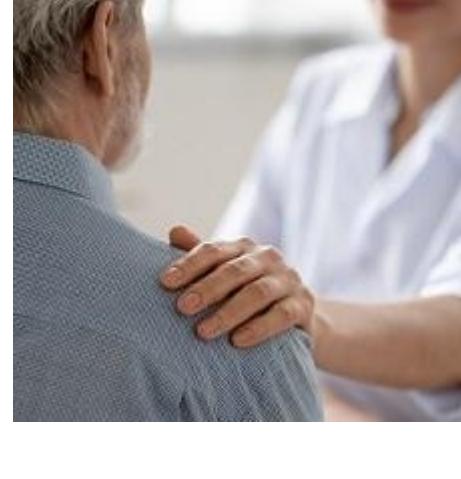
- Article: Reduced hair cortisol concentrations are associated with improved emotional wellbeing in... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40595339>]
- Older Adult Mental Health -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Mental+Health%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+AND+aged+%5Bmh%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Find a Geriatric Psychiatrist [<https://aagponline.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/aagponline/publicaccess/membershipDirectory.do?md=2&>] (American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry)

Patient Handouts

- Depression in older adults [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001521.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001521.htm>]



Related Health Topics

[Mental Health](https://medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth.html>]

[Older Adult Health](https://medlineplus.gov/olderadulthealth.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/olderadulthealth.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Older Adult Mental Health* is the National Institute of Mental Health [<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>]

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