Everyone feels down, or "blue," once in a while. The occasional blue feeling is a normal part of life. But feeling blue without relief for a week or more may be depression. Depression is a very common mental health problem. It can happen to anyone, but it most commonly occurs in adults.

While clinical depression is a common problem for older adults, it is not a normal part of aging. Older adults show signs of depression include a loss of interest in things, ongoing medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart, breast, and changes in memory. Chronic losses like the loss of a spouse, retirement, and having to provide care for children and grandchildren also lead to feelings of depression. The signs of depression are often more severe in older people. When stress and depression are combined, older adults may feel more than just with and down and at the same time, helping to reduce their stress and improving their emotional functioning. Older adults may experience depression in ways that are different from younger adults or older adults. Some older people with depression worry excessively about their health. People with depression cannot "just snap out of it." Their feelings and changes in behavior can be overwhelming for family and friends who find their "moodiness" to be confusing, which can occur without a diagnosis.

Depression can happen to anyone, but it most commonly occurs in adults. When depression is more severe, some older adults have thoughts that life is not worth living or they would be better off dead, and they may even attempt suicide. Sometimes, older adults may feel so hopeless about their future that their mood will never improve, they may consider actually taking their own lives. Suicide is the most tragic outcome of depression. The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, in collaboration with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), is trying to bridge the gap between mental health treatment and help from mental health professionals.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 43 percent of adults in the United States had at least one major depressive episode. Researchers believe that depression can be caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Depression can happen to anyone, but it most commonly occurs in adults.

When clinical depression is a common problem for older adults, it is not a normal part of aging. Older adults show signs of depression include a loss of interest in things, ongoing medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart, breast, and changes in memory. Chronic losses like the loss of a spouse, retirement, and having to provide care for children and grandchildren also lead to feelings of depression. The signs of depression are often more severe in older people. When stress and depression are combined, older adults may feel more than just with and down and having trouble concentrating and remembering things, and having trouble sleeping. As many as 1 in 5 Americans age 50 and older adults may experience depression. Older adults may experience depression in ways that are different from younger adults or older adults. Some older people with depression worry excessively about their health. People with depression cannot "just snap out of it." Their feelings and changes in behavior can be overwhelming for family and friends who find their "moodiness" to be confusing, which can occur without a diagnosis.

"Treatment-resistant depression is really the most common type of depression, says Dr. Karp. "More than half of depressed older adults do not respond to the antidepressant medications they take. Older adults may respond better to cognitive behavioral therapy for younger people. We are trying to learn what is the best treatment options for these patients. With the OPTIMUM study, we are trying to identify those differences and find the safest treatment without side effects or your health.

It is important to get depression diagnosed as early as possible. Several studies have shown that antidepressant medications can reduce the symptoms of depression in older adults. Treatment-resistant depression is really the most common type of depression, says Dr. Karp. "More than half of depressed older adults do not respond to the antidepressant medications they take. Older adults may respond better to cognitive behavioral therapy for younger people. We are trying to learn what is the best treatment options for these patients. With the OPTIMUM study, we are trying to identify those differences and find the safest treatment without side effects or your health.

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