Good Mental Health in Later Life

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- Mental health problems are common among older adults. Depression affects 7% and dementia 5% of the older population.

- Many of these mental health problems go undetected. Older people are often reluctant to seek help.

- Dementia is a progressive brain disease seriously impacting the lives of affected individuals, their families and their caregivers.

- Although less common, alcohol and substance use disorders affect 1% of older adults.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO MENTAL HEALTH IN OLDER AGE?

- Older adults are particularly at risk of social isolation and financial difficulty which can negatively affect mental and general health.

- Chronic physical illnesses such as stroke, diabetes and high blood pressure are common and increase risk for mental disorders among older adults.

- Older adults are vulnerable to neglect and maltreatment.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- Include persistent sadness, low energy and difficulty functioning. Severe depression can lead people to attempt suicide.

SYMPTOMS OF DEMENTIA

- Include forgetfulness, confusion and changes in behaviour.
**IF YOU ARE AN OLDER ADULT:**

- Remain physically and mentally active.
- Maintain relationships with family, friends and the community.
- Take care of your physical health, talk to your family physician or local health service.
- Tell your doctor if you have concerns about your mental health.
- Remember that mental disorders are treatable. Although there is no cure for dementia, treatments exist which can help manage it. People with dementia can live for many years with a good quality of life.

**FOR ALL PEOPLE:**

- Respect and build relationships with older adults in your family and community.
- Recognize mental disorders among older adults you know, encourage them to ask for help.
- Seek support if you are a caregiver of an older adult with severe mental illness.

**WHAT IS WHO DOING?**

WHO supports countries in promoting the mental health of older adults. The mental health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) has the objective to improve identification and treatment of priority mental disorders including among older adults. WHO also assists countries to establish a range of health and social programmes to help older adults with mental health problems.

For more information go to: [www.who.int/mental_health](http://www.who.int/mental_health) [Facebook.com/WorldHealthOrganization](http://Facebook.com/WorldHealthOrganization) [Twitter.com/who](http://Twitter.com/who)