



HERKIMER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING

NUTRITION NEWS

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Merry Christmas!

DECEMBER 2023

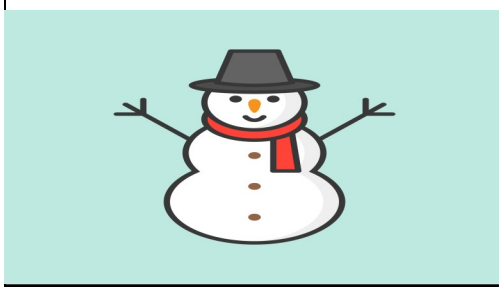
Christmas is right around the corner, and for many it is wonderful time of year! But it can also be difficult for many people, especially for those who are alone or who have recently lost a loved one. Depression is common around the holidays and feelings of loneliness, sadness, and a sense of being overwhelmed can be difficult to deal with.

Depression affects about 6 million Americans over the age of 65. a more sobering statistic is that only about 10% of this population receives treatment for depression. Depression, while often co-existing with other medical conditions in the elderly, can exacerbate certain illnesses. For example, depression in the elderly increases the risk of cardiac disease. It also affects an individual's ability to successfully rehabilitate from an illness or recent surgery.

Once depression is diagnosed, there are treatment options that are available. A combination of medication, counseling, and social involvements can be part of an effect

tive treatment plan. It may be helpful to be aware that antidepressant medications generally take longer to work in the elderly population than they do in individuals under the age of 65.

While medical treatment is an important component, complementary therapies can ease the symptoms of depression as well. Getting involved within the community is a way to feel purposeful and surround yourself with other people who may be in a similar situation. Eating at one of our congregate sites provides you with not only a nutritious meal, but also the opportunity to visit and interact with your peers. Volunteering at a congregate site is also an option that can promote a feeling of well-being and usefulness. Opportunities are all around you!



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NECK ROTATIONS

- Sit upright and inhale
- Rolling shoulders up towards the ears and down.
- Exhale
- Look straight ahead
- Inhale and turn the head towards the left shoulder as far as comfortable
- Exhale
- Hold for 5 seconds
- Inhale and return to starting position
- Repeat on other side

Individuals who suffer from chronic health conditions are at high risk for depression. But those who care for the chronically ill are also at an increased risk for depression. For example, dementia takes a toll on loved ones that are left to do the day to day tasks, in addition to the added jobs involved when caring for someone. These tasks include shopping for food, cooking and preparing meals, cleaning the house, paying the bills, giving medicine, helping the sick individual toilet, bathes, and dress, helping to feed the patient, and providing company as well as emotional support. It is easy to see why caregivers may require some care and assistance of their own.

Caregivers are also at increased risk of developing their own chronic health conditions. The physical, emotional, and mental stresses of taking care of a loved one puts extra strain on the body. Studies show that caregivers have an increased risk of developing the following health problems:

- ◆ Alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse
- ◆ Anxiety disorders
- ◆ Cancer
- ◆ Diabetes
- ◆ Heart disease, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heart attack
- ◆ Heartburn
- ◆ Infection
- ◆ Obesity
- ◆ Pain, such as muscle or joint pain or headaches
- ◆ Stress and depression

There are ways to combat the risk of depression when caring for a sick loved one. Making sure you have time carved out for your-

self is important. Have a little bit of time set aside every day, if possible, to do something that you enjoy. Take a relaxing walk, bake a special treat, or just make a phone call to a friend to chat.

Keep in mind that there is assistance out there for caregivers as well. You can start by contacting the Office for the Aging to steer you in the right direction. Respite care, adult day care, home health care, and transportation can all help ease the difficulties of caring for a loved one.

Regardless of the reasons for depression, there are ways to combat these feelings through behavior changes. Here are a few tips:

1. Get in a routine: establishing a general daily routine can help you get more structure into your life.
2. Set goals: setting small goals, and then achieving them, can help alleviate the feeling of helplessness that often accompanies depression.
3. Exercise: it temporarily boosts endorphins and may also have long term benefits.
4. Eat healthy: if depression tends to make you overeat, gaining some control over your intake may help you feel better.
5. Get enough sleep: simply put, getting too little sleep can make depression worse. Try not to nap. Try to go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
6. Take on responsibilities: staying involved and having daily requirements can be a good natural treatment for depression.
7. Check with your doctor before starting supplements: while fish oil and folic acid may improve depression, more definitive studies must be conducted.

8. Try something new: challenging ourselves can also raise the level of “feel good” blood chemicals.
9. Try to have fun: make sure you have some time every day for things you enjoy.

Here are some foods that might boost your mood as well!

- Chocolate: eating dark chocolate every day (1.4 ounces) for two weeks reduced stress hormones including cortisol in people who were highly stressed. Researchers believe this is due to the antioxidants that are found in dark chocolate.
- Carbs even though carbohydrates are sometimes blamed for packing on the pounds, people who followed a very low carb diet (only 20-40 grams daily) experiences more depression, anxiety, and anger than those who ate a diet moderate in carbohydrates. Researchers speculate that carbs promote the production of serotonin.
- Fruits and vegetables: individuals who ate a diet rich in fruits and vegetables report fewer feelings of depression than those whose diet was made up of a large amount of desserts, fried foods, processed foods, refined grains, and high fat dairy products. The antioxidants present in fruits and vegetables, along with folate, can also reduce your feelings of depression.
- Fish: eating oily, fatty fish, which are high in omega-3's can positively affect your mood. Omega-3's alter the production of brain chemicals associated with mood, such as dopamine and serotonin.
- Saffron: saffron is a spice that is also sold in caplet form. It is unclear why saffron boosts your mood, but a recent study showed that individuals who had a saffron capsule daily (as opposed to those who had a placebo) re-

ported fewer feelings of depression and discontent.

- Coconut: if you're under stress, the scent of coconut may blunt your natural “fight or flight” response. This may not be unique to coconut however. Researchers propose that inhaling any pleasant scent enhances your alertness and soothes your response to stress.
- Tea: drinking tea daily may promote a feeling of alertness and overall well being. Researchers believe that theanine (an amino acid found in tea) in combination with caffeine may improve focus and attention. This may, in turn, promote a satisfied feeling, which leads to an overall feeling of well being.

Don't forget to enrich your diet with foods high in Vitamin B12, folic acid, selenium, and Vitamin D. All of these nutrients are thought to play a possible role in keeping you mentally healthy.



HEAP

The income guidelines for this year are as follows:

- Household of 1: \$3,035
- Household of 2: \$3,970
- Household of 3: \$4,904

The HEAP Program also offers the Clean and Tune Program and Furnace Repair and Replacement Program.

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Coconut (Haupia) and Chocolate Pie

- 1 (9 inch) unbaked pie crust
- 1 (14 ounce) can coconut milk
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup cornstarch
- 1 1/4 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1/4 cup white sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake crust in the preheated oven until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool.

Whisk coconut milk, milk, and 1 cup sugar in a medium saucepan. Mix water and cornstarch in a separate bowl until smooth. Bring coconut mixture to a boil; reduce to a simmer and slowly whisk in cornstarch mixture. Continue stirring over low heat until thickened, about 3 minutes.

Place chocolate chips in a microwave-safe bowl; microwave until melted, about 1 minute. Divide coconut pudding evenly into two bowls. Stir chocolate into one portion; spread on the bottom of the pie crust. Pour the remaining portion of pudding on top of the chocolate and spread smooth. Refrigerate pie for about 1 hour.

Beat cream in a chilled glass or metal bowl with an electric mixer until frothy. Add sugar gradually, continuing to beat until soft peaks form. Layer the cream on top of the pie.



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Funding for this newsletter is from the NYS Office for the Aging & Herkimer County