

# RECOGNIZING AND TREATING DEPRESSION IN LONG-TERM CARE

Depression is NOT a normal part of aging, and may be unrecognized by staff because it can be masked by other physical and mental illnesses.



## SOME FACTS

- Many people have a short-term episode of depression when they first move into a long-term care home; others come into long-term care with pre-existing depression
- Many factors can contribute to symptoms of depression, ranging from increasing disability to the loss of loved ones
- Many of the symptoms of dementia, such as withdrawal or irritability, can also be symptoms of depression

## COMMON SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- Expression of feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Frequent crying; persistently sad or anxious
- Loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities
- Easily fatigued; decreased energy; sleep problems
- Loss of appetite; significant weight loss; sometimes increase in appetite
- Recurrent aches and pains that are not responsive to treatment

## HELPING RESIDENTS FEEL BETTER

Long-term care homes look for early signs of depressive symptoms as a preventative measure. The goal is to improve the resident's mood and prevent symptoms from worsening as much as possible. Along with medical help, there are many ways to help residents feel better:

- Encourage regular visits from family and friends
- Support activities that provide a sense of purpose and pleasure. For example, singing, painting, listening to music and activities that promote social interaction
- Keep residents active – walking programs and chair exercises