

# Diabetes and Depression in Older Women

*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC - safer, healthier people.*

[Kathy Maddox] Welcome to this CDC women's health podcast about diabetes and depression in older women. I'm your host, Kathy Maddox.

Depression is a common concern for people with diabetes, especially older women. When people who have diabetes are depressed, it may be hard for them to follow a diabetes treatment plan and maintain good blood sugar control. Dr. Michelle Owens-Gary, with CDC's Division of Diabetes Translation, is joining me today to talk about this important issue. Welcome, Dr. Owens-Gary.

[Michelle Owens-Gary] Thank you, Kathy.

[Kathy Maddox] Dr. Owens-Gary, what is depression?

[Michelle Owens-Gary] Kathy, depression is a common and serious medical condition that can affect the way a person thinks, feels, functions, and how they cope with life's demands. Depression is more than feeling down one day or having the "blues." It can severely change a person's life by affecting their appetite, sleep patterns, their interest in everyday activities, their work productivity, and relationships with others. So, for example, a person who is depressed may find that they're sleeping more or less than usual or that they no longer have interest in things that they once enjoyed. Depression can occur at any age and if it's left untreated, it can last a lifetime.

[Kathy Maddox] Why is depression something that people with diabetes need to be concerned about?

[Michelle Owens-Gary] If depression goes untreated in people with diabetes, it can increase the risk for diabetes-related complications, such as heart disease, blindness, amputations, stroke, and kidney disease. By getting early treatment for depression, people with diabetes can often avoid these serious complications.

[Kathy Maddox] Tell us why depression is an issue for older women with diabetes.

[Michelle Owens-Gary] More older women with diabetes experience poor physical health than older men with diabetes because women tend to live longer than older men and they tend to be less physically active. Because women have poor physical health, they are more likely to be at risk for developing depression when they have diabetes. For example, a physical illness can be a condition that is long-lasting. It may affect an older woman's ability to function and her overall quality of life, which ultimately makes her vulnerable to depression.

[Kathy Maddox] What can place older women with diabetes at risk for depression?

[Michelle Owens-Gary] Having low income can place older women with diabetes at risk for depression. The highest rates of poverty are found among women, older people, and people from ethnic minority groups. Women with diabetes are almost twice as likely as women without diabetes to have low-income. Poor older women with diabetes may be at risk for depression because of social isolation and limited resources, including not having access to health care.

[Kathy Maddox] So, what should older women with diabetes do if they think they might be depressed?

[Michelle Owens-Gary] They should make an appointment and see their doctor right away. The sooner they get treatment, the sooner they'll begin to feel better. People with diabetes and depression should also maintain a healthy diet and get at least two and a half hours of physical activity every week. Being physically active and maintaining a healthy diet can not only help reduce diabetes complications, but also help a person feel better when they're dealing with depression. A lot of women aged 65 and older believe it's normal to develop depression as they age, but depression is not a normal part of growing older.

[Kathy Maddox] Thank you, Dr. Owens-Gary, for sharing this information about diabetes and depression in older women. For more information on how to prevent and control diabetes, please visit [www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov) or call 1-888-693-6337. For more information on women's health, visit [www.cdc.gov/women](http://www.cdc.gov/women). For CDC, I'm Kathy Maddox.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.*