

# IS IT ANGER, OR SOMETHING MORE? UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION IN OLDER MEN



It can be easy to miss or misinterpret the signs of depression in an older man when they show up as anger or phrases like:

**“People get on my nerves.” “I’m just tired.” “I don’t need to talk about it.”**

These can all be signs that something deeper is going on. The National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute on Aging both note that depression can include irritability, sleep changes, withdrawal, and increased alcohol use, and NIA specifically notes that sadness is not always the main symptom in older adults.

## **SIGNS OF DEPRESSION IN OLDER MEN**

Every person is different, but here are a few common examples of changes families and loved ones may recognize:

### **The "short fuse" change**

A man who used to be patient now gets irritated quickly. He may seem angry over everyday things, but underneath that anger may be stress, hopelessness, or emotional pain.

### **The "checking out" change**

He spends more time alone, stops going places, or loses interest in activities he used to enjoy. He may say he is "fine," but he is less engaged and harder to connect with.

### **The "physical symptoms first" change**

He talks more about body aches, headaches, poor sleep, or low energy than emotions. That does not mean the symptoms are "all in his head." Depression and physical health are closely connected, and many people notice physical symptoms first.

### **The "coping" change**

He starts using alcohol more often, works constantly, or distracts himself all day to avoid talking or feeling. These behaviors can look like coping, but they may also be signs of depression.

If this sounds like a family member or loved one, a good first step is to open the door to an honest, respectful conversation about mental health.

Our hospital-based outpatient program meets the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

**Call us today at**