

## **5 Mental Illnesses Commonly Seen in Older Adults**

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**Mental Illness** – A condition that impacts a person’s thinking, feeling, behavior or mood and may affect their ability to relate effectively with others and function on a daily basis.

**Depression** – A serious mental health condition that causes overwhelming feelings of sadness and loss of interest. It affects how you feel, think and behave. It can lead to emotional and physical problems that last for a long time. These feelings can keep you from living a normal, active life. Depression is different from sadness or grief/bereavement. It is not a normal part of growing older.

**Anxiety** - A normal and often healthy emotion. However, when a person regularly feels disproportionate levels of anxiety, it might become a medical disorder. Anxiety disorders form a category of mental health diagnoses that lead to excessive nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worry.

**Dementia** - a group of conditions characterized by impairment of at least two brain functions, such as memory loss and judgment.

Symptoms include forgetfulness, limited social skills, and thinking abilities so impaired that it interferes with daily functioning.

Alzheimer’s disease is the most common dementia. An estimated 5.8 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's dementia in 2020. An estimated 13.8 million people 65 and older are projected to have Alzheimer’s dementia by 2050. [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** - a condition of persistent mental and emotional stress occurring as a result of injury or severe psychological shock, either experiencing it or witnessing it- typically involving disturbance of sleep and constant vivid recall of the experience, with dulled responses to others and to the outside world. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

**Hoarding** - a persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions because of a perceived need to save them. The person experiences distress at the thought of getting rid of the items. Excessive accumulation of items, regardless of actual value, occurs. Some risks of hoarding in older adults are medication mismanagement, falls, fires, infestation, food contamination and social isolation.