



The AGS Foundation for  
Health in Aging's

# Tips for Beating the Holiday Blues

**It's a time of celebration, parties, and get-togethers,**

but sometimes, the holiday season can also be a source of the blues, especially for older people. Older adults may think about how quickly time has passed, or miss loved ones more during this time of year. Health conditions or concerns about money can also make it harder to enjoy the holidays. Fortunately, there are ways to help cope with the melancholy that may accompany the holidays and the AGS Foundation for Health in Aging offers the following tips:

**If you feel blue, try to:**

**Get out and about:** Ask family and friends for help traveling to parties and events. Invite family and friends over.

**Volunteer:** Helping others is a great mood lifter. To volunteer contact your local United Way (it's listed in the phone book or check [www.unitedway.org](http://www.unitedway.org)); or call local schools, churches, synagogues or mosques and ask about volunteer opportunities in your neighborhood.

**Limit the eggnog:** Too much alcohol can lower your spirits.

**Accept your feelings:** There's nothing "wrong" with not feeling jolly; many people get the blues during the holidays.

**Confide in someone:** Talk about your feelings; it can help you understand why you feel the way you do.

**Recognize warning signs of depression:** Holiday blues are usually temporary and mild but depression is more serious and can linger unless you get help. Look for these signs:

- sadness that won't lift; loss of interest or pleasure
- changes in appetite or weight or sleeping a lot more or a lot less than usual
- crying often
- feeling restless or tired all the time
- feeling worthless or helpless or guilty
- slowed thinking
- thoughts of death or suicide

**Start the healing:** If you're depressed, see your healthcare provider. Depression is very treatable.

## If an older loved one has the blues or seems depressed:

**Include them:** Invite them out and to get-togethers. Take into account their needs – for transportation or special diets.

**Lend a hand:** Offer help with shopping, and preparations for get-togethers in their homes.

**Be a good listener:** Encourage your loved one to talk about how he or she is feeling. Acknowledge “difficult” feelings, including a sense of loss if family or friends have died or moved away.

### Encourage him or her to talk with

**a healthcare provider:** Many older people don’t realize when they’re depressed, so if you suspect depression, you may need to bring it up more than once. Let your loved one know depression is a medical illness and is nothing to be ashamed of.

## Where to get more information:

For more on depression in older adults visit the Web site of the American Geriatrics Society’s Foundation for Health in Aging (FHA). Go to

[http://www.healthinaging.org/agingintheknow/chapters\\_ch\\_trial.asp?ch=32](http://www.healthinaging.org/agingintheknow/chapters_ch_trial.asp?ch=32).



### Foundation for Health in Aging Established by the American Geriatrics Society

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The Foundation for Health in Aging builds a bridge between the research and practice of geriatrics health care professionals and the public. The Foundation advocates on behalf of older adults and their special needs through public education, clinical research, and public policy.

The American Geriatrics Society is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of older adults. With a membership of over 6,000 health care professionals, the AGS has a long history of improving the health care of older adults.