

DEPRESSION AND ARTHRITIS

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There is a link between arthritis and depression, but most experts do not believe it is a direct one; that is, depression is not thought to cause arthritis, and most people with arthritis are not depressed. However, many of the more than 100 types of arthritis are chronic, incurable, and difficult to predict, worsening and improving for no apparent reason. These factors and the effects of arthritis on function and quality of life can combine to trigger a reactive depression, that is, depression in response to a stressful illness, with feelings of helplessness, loss, and sadness.

In addition, the mind and the body have strong connections, so that pre-existing or coincidental depression may worsen the experience of arthritis. When your abilities to cope with pain and loss of function are reduced by depression, the effects of arthritis tend to be worse.

Even though arthritis may trigger depression and depression can intensify the symptoms of arthritis, there are reasons to be optimistic. In the past years, several new and highly effective medications have been approved

for the treatment and for related conditions. Even when medications fail, surgical techniques have improved dramatically in the past 20 years, making 'crippling arthritis' much rarer than in the past.

People with arthritis are encouraged as never before to take charge of their illness and to be an active participant in adapting to the demands of the illness, deciding about treatment, and working as a partner with their health-care providers to manage all aspects of the illness. This active role can reduce the sense of helplessness and loss of control that many people with arthritis experience.

In addition, new treatments for depression - whether related or unrelated to arthritis - provide important options that did not exist only a few years ago. Some antidepressants have chemical properties that not only improve mood but may also be effective treatments for chronic pain, a real bonus for people with arthritis.

"Self-help works. "



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