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Study Shows That Depressive Symptoms Follow "U" - Shaped Pattern



Depressive symptoms are highest in young adulthood, decrease in midlife, and then increase in later years, Angelina Sutin, Ph.D., an assistant professor of medical humanities and social sciences at Florida State University, and colleagues report in [JAMA Psychiatry](#). The longitudinal study included more than 10,000 depressive-symptom assessments conducted on some 2,300 subjects. "Symptoms of depression follow a U-shaped pattern across adulthood," Sutin and her team concluded, noting that "Older adults experience an increase in distress that is not due solely to declines in physical health or approaching death."

"This is an interesting study," Dilip Jeste, M.D., immediate past APA president and chair of aging at the University of California, San Diego, told *Psychiatric News*. "The findings are consistent with an increased prevalence of subsyndromal (but not major) depression in older age. It should be noted, however, that the increase in depressive symptoms...was relatively small. Also, the overall trajectory of symptoms, especially around middle age, is at variance with several other studies...showing a worsening of quality of well-being from age 20 to 50, with improved self-reported mental functioning thereafter. The reasons for the discrepant results are not obvious and need further research."

More information about studies on depression and aging, as well as about Jeste's on views on aging, can be found in [Psychiatric News](#).