Bladder & Bowel Control: “Losing It” Isn’t Normal Aging?

By Sue Daugherty

There are some changes that people believe are “normal” aging, which are not normal at all. Losing bladder control or bowel control are two prime examples of what is NOT normal aging. Yet, it is accepted as being our cross to bear as we continue to grow older.

If properly diagnosed, there is an outpatient surgery, known as InterStim, that has produced 75% + success rate for the treatment of those suffering from loss of bowel or bladder control.

According to Dr. Rick Visci, Obstetrics & Gynecology, NOMS, some bladder incontinence is caused by muscle problems in the bladder; or by nerve impulse problems signaling the bladder or bowel. When it’s a nerve problem, “The brain isn’t telling the bladder to contract, yet the muscles contract anyway”. “This is when a person loses bladder or bowel control”.

A doctor will treat by using the least invasive treatment first. This exposes the patient to the least amount of risk. Dr. Visci explained that for some changing the diet can work. For the bladder, Kegel exercises, physical therapy, or maybe a prescription medication that acts on the muscles of the bladder could be the cure. If none of the above are effective, there is still hope – an outpatient surgical procedure known as InterStim.

Dr. Visci is a provider of the InterStim surgery. He implants a device that works like a pace-maker for the bladder or the bowel. InterStim affects the nerves that go to the bladder or bowel and reduces the impulses that cause contractions. For more information about this and other innovations that exist to improve the quality of life and support maintaining independence, attend the “Techno Expo for Maintaining Independence” July 24, 10am until 1pm, at the Erie County Senior Center, 620 E. Water Street - Sandusky. Sponsored by Serving Our Seniors and The Erie County Senior Center.

Depression – Is It a Normal Part of Aging?

by Susan Lowell, LISW-s, Mental Health Counseling and Consulting Services

The answer is NO. Depression is not a normal part of the aging process. Yet many adults believe that due to the experiences associated with aging that the two go hand in hand. Depression is a true and treatable medical condition, just like diabetes and hypertension.

Depression is not just having “the blues” or the emotions felt when grieving the loss of a loved one. Older adults, family members and healthcare professionals may mistake the symptoms of depression as just a normal reaction to illness, financial hardships, or other life challenges that may occur as we age. These misconceptions contribute to depression being under recognized and under treated.

An older adult who is depressed has one or more of the following symptoms: feelings of sadness or anxiety that last for more than two weeks, social isolation, crying spells, lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities, thoughts of harm to self or others, decreased energy not related to another medical condition, feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness, decreased concentration or indecisiveness, change in sleep patterns and appetite.

Fortunately there are many treatments available to treat depression. The best proven treatment for depression is a combination of counseling and antidepressant medication. This may result in an older person being able to see an improvement in their mood, their relationships with others, and increased ability to cope with stress. An open and honest discussion with your healthcare provider about depressive symptoms can lead to an older adult gaining control of their life back. The process of aging may be challenging, but it does not mean that the outlook on the future has to be filled with sadness, grief and loss.