

SENIORS

Sensory Loss Can Bring Increased Risk of Isolation, Depression

NewsUSA

(NU) - According to a study by The University of Chicago, nearly 94 percent of older adults in the United States are living with at least one diminished sense. While many seniors experience hearing or vision loss, senses such as taste, touch and smell can also be affected.

Diminished senses are commonly regarded as minor annoyances, but they have also been linked to serious and long-lasting problems for older adults, including loneliness and feelings of social isolation. Researchers at the University of British Columbia examined the impact of undiagnosed or untreated hearing issues in seniors ages 60 to 69 and found that for every 10 decibel drop in hearing sensitivity, the odds of social isolation increase by 52 percent.

Left undetected, the loss of senses can result in feelings of depression and diminished quality of life for older adults. That's why Home Instead Senior Care encourages families to be mindful of signs that an older adult is experiencing diminished senses, including:

- **Hearing:** Signs of hearing loss can include difficulty following conversations, increased exhaustion following social interactions, trouble maintaining balance, feeling as if there is a buildup of wax or fluid in the ears, or continually increasing volume on television and radio programs.

- **Sight:** Visual impairment affects almost 3 million older adults in the United States. Warning signs may include hesitance with stairs, blurry or discolored vision, difficulty identifying familiar faces or objects, and loss of interest in read-



ing mail, newspapers or books.

- **Touch:** Weakened sensitivity to touch can also pose a hazard to seniors. A decreased reaction time to very hot or very cold surfaces can be a sign that the sense of touch is beginning to decline, and can lead to accidental injuries.

- **Taste/Smell:** Additionally, a diminished sense of taste and smell can also occur as we age. According to The University of Chicago, 74 percent of aging adults will suffer from impairment to the sense of taste, which works simultaneously with the sense of smell. Individuals may experience lack of appetite, loss of interest in food altogether, or complete loss of taste or smell.

Home Instead Senior Care provides specialized training for its CAREGiversSM to help them better understand the aging process, identify the signs of sensory loss and deliver the best care for seniors experiencing the impacts of sensory loss, such as loneliness and isolation. If you are interested in receiving more information about sensory loss or looking for support for an aging loved one, you can find additional resources at caregiverstress.com or find a Home Instead office near you at www.homeinstead.com/state.