



KAISER PERMANENTE®

Loss of a Loved One

The period following the loss of a loved one is one of the most painful times in a person's life. During bereavement, people experience pain in many forms—both mental and physical.

The following symptoms are all characteristic of normal grief:

Intense sadness and depression;

- Fear, nervousness, or even panic;
- Fatigue, insomnia, and disturbing dreams;
- Loss of appetite and weight;
- Fear of a nervous breakdown; and
- Peculiar thoughts and hallucinations. These may include the belief that the loved one is still alive or even seeing or hearing the person—even though you know that person has died.

None of these symptoms is an indication of mental illness and none is a sign of weakness. Having these sorts of symptoms is a natural response to a significant loss. As long as these symptoms remain moderate in severity, they do not necessarily require treatment. However, if these symptoms persist in a severe form for more than two or three months, you might consider seeking help.

The fact is that the pain of acute grief naturally decreases after a while for most people. Sadness may linger, however, as well as a feeling of loneliness. Of course, the everyday practical problems that we all face from day to day will still be with you, and you'll also need to adjust to a different kind of life. During this time, it's important to seek help and support from your friends. You may also wish to join a bereavement support group or call Kaiser Permanente's Hospice Program for support or referral to a support group.

Finally, if you find yourself starting to rely on alcohol or drugs or growing preoccupied with the thought of suicide, you should definitely seek professional help. If you're considering this, consult with your health care professional or the Psychiatry Department at your local Kaiser Permanente facility. Other danger signs you should look out for include a lack of motivation to comply with treatment for your own medical conditions, deteriorating relationships with family and friends, or a prolonged inability to resume your basic life functions. Be aware that the bereavement period is one of high risk for your own medical conditions. Any medical symptoms should be taken seriously, and a health check-up may be wise even without symptoms.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at www.kaiserpermanente.org/california, then click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION