

# Study examines trends in symptoms experienced at the end of life

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A new analysis published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* indicates that fewer older adults may be experiencing certain symptoms that can restrict their activity at the end of life.

The analysis examined information on 665 individuals in Connecticut who were aged 70 years or older when they died between 1998 and 2019. Investigators assessed the occurrence of 16 restricting symptoms within 6 months of death during monthly interviews.

From 1998 to 2019, rates decreased for 5 restricting symptoms (difficulty sleeping; [chest pain](#) or tightness; shortness of breath; cold or flu symptoms; and nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea), increased for 3 (arm or leg weakness; [urinary incontinence](#); and memory or thinking problem), and changed little for the other 8 (poor eyesight; anxiety; depression; musculoskeletal pain; fatigue; dizziness or unsteadiness; frequent or painful urination; and swelling in feet or ankles).

"Based on our results, the occurrence of most restricting symptoms at the end of life has been decreasing or stable over the past two decades," said lead author Thomas M. Gill, MD, of the Yale School of Medicine.

"These results suggest that end-of-life care has been improving, although additional efforts will be needed to further reduce symptom burden at the [end of life](#)."

**More information:** Thomas M. Gill et al, Trends in Restricting Symptoms at the End of Life from 1998 to 2019: A Cohort Study of Older Persons, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.16871](#)

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