



Health Care Agency
Behavioral Health Services
Prevention & Intervention

30 Things You Should Know About Mental Illness



For more information, talk with your health care provider or contact your local mental health services.

Visit these websites:

- National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
www.nami.org
- Mental Health America
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

If you are in crisis or afraid you may hurt yourself, call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

Mental Illness Can Happen to Anyone

1. Mental illnesses are conditions that affect the brain. They can cause changes in the way people feel, think and act.
2. Mental illness is common. Each year more than 50 million people in the U.S. are affected by mental illness.
3. People with untreated mental illnesses may have a hard time coping with everyday life and may also feel physically sick.
4. Mental illness can happen to anyone. It affects people of all ages and all backgrounds.
5. No one knows the exact cause of mental illness. Family history (genetics), brain chemistry, or very stressful or traumatic events may all be factors.
6. There are more than 200 forms of mental illness. Many people suffer from more than one type at the same time.
7. Treatment helps most people get better and stay well.

Major Depression

8. Depression severely affects how you feel. It can happen to children, teens and adults.
9. Depression affects a person's health, school, work and family life; and even eating and sleeping habits.
10. Depression brings severe and long-lasting feelings of sadness. It can even cause a person to feel like life is not worth living.
11. Sometimes depression is accompanied by drug and alcohol abuse. It can also occur with other long-term health problems.



Anxiety Disorders

12. Anxiety disorders often cause both physical and emotional symptoms.
13. There are different types of anxiety disorders.
14. Panic attacks cause very strong feelings of fear along with physical signs such as shortness of breath, a pounding heart and dizziness.
15. Phobias cause people to have major fears of everyday things that are not really harmful.
16. Obsessive-compulsive disorder causes people to believe that doing certain actions over and over will keep them from harm.
17. Anxiety disorders often occur along with depression, drug and alcohol abuse, or another type of mental illness.



Bipolar Disorder

18. People with bipolar disorder suffer from major changes in their mood, energy level and ability to cope with daily life.
19. The mood swings involve periods of feeling very "up," full of energy and sometimes irritable, followed by periods of feeling very "down," sad and hopeless. These periods are called episodes of mania and depression.
20. These episodes can be very difficult and may cause a person to feel like life is not worth living.



Schizophrenia

21. Schizophrenia affects the way a person thinks and acts.
22. It sometimes causes people to hear or see things that are not really there (hallucinations). They may have beliefs that do not match reality (delusions).
23. They may act paranoid or disoriented. They may withdraw from people and have trouble sleeping and concentrating.
24. The signs and symptoms vary. They can come on very quickly, or appear slowly over years. They may go away for a while then reappear.



Getting Help for Mental Illness

25. A person with a mental illness may not realize he or she needs help. That can be a symptom of the illness.
26. People with mental illnesses may not seek help because they believe their problems will go away on their own, or they may feel ashamed or afraid to ask.
27. Getting help early is important.
28. People with some types of mental illness need ongoing treatment, just like with other health problems.
29. There are many ways to treat mental illness. Most people can get better with the right treatment.
30. Treatments include medication, talk or behavioral therapy and getting help from support groups, friends and family.



This pamphlet is not a substitute for professional medical care. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with a health care provider.

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