

## **What is mental health?**

Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being. It is all about how people think, feel, and behave. People sometimes use the term “mental health” to mean the absence of a mental disorder.

Mental health can affect daily living, relationships, and physical health.

However, this link also works in the other direction. Factors in people’s lives, interpersonal connections, and physical factors can all contribute to mental health disruptions.

Looking after mental health can preserve a person’s ability to enjoy life. Doing this involves reaching a balance between life activities, responsibilities, and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

Conditions such as stress, depression, and anxiety can all affect mental health and disrupt a person’s routine.

Although the term mental health is in common use, many conditions that doctors recognize as psychological disorders have physical roots.

## **Common mental health disorders**

The most common types of mental illness are as follows:

- anxiety disorders
- mood disorders
- schizophrenia disorders

## **Early signs**

There is no physical test or scan that reliably indicates whether a person has developed a mental illness. However, people should look out for the following as possible signs of a mental health disorder:

- withdrawing from friends, family, and colleagues
- avoiding activities that they would normally enjoy
- sleeping too much or too little
- eating too much or too little
- feeling hopeless
- having consistently low energy
- using mood-altering substances, including alcohol and nicotine, more frequently
- displaying negative emotions
- being confused
- being unable to complete daily tasks, such as getting to work or cooking a meal
- having persistent thoughts or memories that reappear regularly
- thinking of causing physical harm to themselves or others
- hearing voices
- experiencing delusions

## **Treatment**

There are various methods for managing mental health problems. Treatment is highly individual, and what works for one person may not work for another.

Some strategies or treatments are more successful in combination with others. A person living with a chronic mental disorder may choose different options at various stages in their life.

The individual needs to work closely with a doctor who can help them identify their needs and provide them with suitable treatment.

Treatments can include:

### **Psychotherapy, or talking therapies**

This type of treatment takes a psychological approach to treating mental illness. Cognitive behavioral therapy, exposure therapy, and dialectical behavior therapy are examples.

Psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, and some primary care physicians carry out this type of treatment.

It can help people understand the root of their mental illness and start to work on more healthful thought patterns that support everyday living and reduce the risk of isolation and self-harm.

### **Medication**

Some people take prescribed medications, such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anxiolytic drugs.

Although these cannot cure mental disorders, some medications can improve symptoms and help a person resume social interaction and a normal routine while they work on their mental health.

Some of these medications work by boosting the body's absorption of feel-good chemicals, such as serotonin, from the brain. Other drugs either boost the overall levels of these chemicals or prevent their degradation or destruction.

### **Self-help**

A person coping with mental health difficulties will usually need to make changes to their lifestyle to facilitate wellness.

Such changes might include reducing alcohol intake, sleeping more, and eating a balanced, nutritious diet. People may need to take time away from work or resolve issues with personal relationships that may be causing damage to their mental health.

People with conditions such as an anxiety or depressive disorder may benefit from relaxation techniques, which include deep breathing, meditation, and mindfulness.

Having a support network, whether via self-help groups or close friends and family, can also be essential to recovery from mental illness.