

Health tip: Mental health

Understanding Mental Health

Talking about depression, anxiety or other problems that may affect your mental health isn't always easy, but let's start the conversation. If you or a loved one may be dealing with these issues, you're not alone. Millions of people in the United States are affected by behavioral health issues each year.¹ Learning how to talk about and understand your mental health may be the first step to recovery.

Mental health, also known as behavioral health, are terms used to describe several problems that may affect your mental well-being, including your emotional, psychological, and social well-being.² Behavioral health includes stress, anxiety, depression, mood disorders and other psychological issues. Behavioral health disorders may also include things like substance use disorders, eating disorders, or psychotic disorders.



What are common signs of mental health problems?

Mental health problems are not always easily identified, but if you identify any of these signs or behaviors, it may be time to seek help:

- Eating or sleeping too much
- Losing interest in people and activities
- Feeling hopeless
- Aches and pains
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Drug use
- Irritability and anger
- Feeling depressed
- Thoughts of harming oneself or others
- Thoughts of suicide

Asking for help may be your most important step in taking care of yourself, as poor mental health can impact several parts of your life. Specifically, poor mental health affects your relationships with others and yourself, and it may impair the way you cope with stress. It is also associated with stroke and chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of dementia.³



Mental health myths⁶

- Myth:** Mental health problems do not affect me
- Myth:** People with mental health problems are violent and unpredictable
- Myth:** Personality weakness or character flaws cause mental health problems
- Myth:** There is no hope for people with mental health problems
- Myth:** Therapy and self-help are a waste of time
- Myth:** Prevention doesn't work. It is impossible to prevent mental illness



Personal habits to support emotional well-being^{4,5}

Fortunately, there are several habits that may support emotional well-being. Here are some examples:

- **Build resilience:** Those who are emotionally well have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties quicker. You may build resilience by developing healthier physical habits, taking time for yourself each day, and practicing gratitude.
- **Reduce stress:** Chronic stress is harmful to your mental and physical health. Manage your stress by exercising regularly, setting your priorities, and showing compassion for yourself.
- **Get quality sleep:** At times, your sleep may be sacrificed. However, sleep is vital for both mental and physical health. Get better sleep at night by setting a bedtime routine, limiting use of electronics before bedtime, and avoiding caffeine in the afternoon.
- **Strengthen social connections:** Social connections have powerful effects on our health. Stay connected by building strong relationships with loved ones, volunteering for an organization in your community, or taking a class to learn something new.
- **Be mindful:** Being mindful is to live in the present moment. You may be more mindful by meditating, practicing mindful eating, and being more aware of your body, thoughts, and feelings.
- **Cope with loss:** There is no right way to cope with the death of a loved one, but grieving is an important part of the process. Be sure to take care of yourself, join a support group or speak with a professional, and be patient during such a difficult time.



Employee Assistance Program⁵

An Employee Assistance Program or EAP is a free, voluntary, and confidential service offered through your employer to help you and your family with your well-being. Some of the services your EAP may provide include mental health, financial, legal, eldercare, and childcare support. Speak with your UnitedHealthcare representative or onsite coordinator to obtain more information. Visit www.myuhc.com to learn about programs that may be available to you through your health plan.



Sources:

¹ National Alliance on Mental Illness. <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>. 2022. Accessed August 2022.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>. 2021. Accessed August 2022.

³ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>. 2022. Accessed August 2022.

⁴ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>. 2022. Accessed August 2022.

⁵ UnitedHealthcare. <https://www.uhc.com/member-resources/health-care-programs/employee-assistance-program>. 2022. Accessed August 2022.

⁶ U. S. Department of Health & Human Services. <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/mental-health-myths-facts>. 2022. Accessed August 2022.

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