

Health tip: Mental health



Understanding Mental Health

Millions of people in the United States are affected by behavioral health issues each year. Talking about depression, anxiety or other problems that may affect your mental health isn't always easy. However, taking the first step to discuss concerns may initiate support and recovery.¹

Mental health is the component of behavioral health that includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Mental health is a state of well-being that enables us to cope with the stresses of life, realize our abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to our community. Mental health issues range from inability to manage stress to illnesses such as substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, and psychotic disorders.²

What are common signs of mental health problems?³

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 or too little
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Experiencing severe mood swings
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform regular daily tasks like taking care of children

Asking for help is one of the most important steps in taking care of yourself. Poor mental health may affect your relationships, how you handle stress, and your overall well-being. It's also linked to serious health conditions, including stroke, diabetes, heart disease, and some types of dementia.²

continued

Mental health myths⁴

- 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

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

Personal habits to support emotional well-being⁵

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 may be 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 Program⁶

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 myuhc.com to learn about programs that may be available to you through your health plan.



Sources:

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