

Make Your Mental Health a Priority





Taking Care of Yourself Should Include Your Mental Health

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. It not only includes your emotional, psychological, and social well-being, it affects how you think, feel and act. It also helps determine how you handle stress, relate to others and make choices. To be able to properly care for the people you love, you must first take care of yourself.

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Many factors can impact your mental health, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental illness or substance abuse
- Daily stressors, such as work or family concerns
- Grief or loss of a loved one

If you are experiencing mental health struggles, you are not alone. There are many resources available to help you feel better. The first step is to recognize when you are struggling and reach out for help.

Stress and Anxiety

Many people experience stress or anxiety on occasion. It's a normal part of life. However, persistent stress can negatively impact your mental health. Some signs you may be stressed include feeling easily angered, having low energy or experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns. There are ways to help lessen the effects of stress that you can practice every day.

- Get regular exercise; try walking for 30 minutes each day
- Eat a healthy diet
- Reach out and connect with family or friends
- Take breaks from the news and social media
- Make time for a hobby or a relaxing activity
- Keep a regular schedule for meals and sleep

Anxiety Disorders

Occasional anxiety is an expected part of life, but when worry and fear about everyday situations become frequent, intense, excessive and persistent it is known as an anxiety disorder.

These feelings of anxiety and panic can interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are often out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time. You may avoid places or situations to prevent these feelings. Symptoms may start during childhood or the teen years and continue into adulthood.

Anxiety disorders also affect 25.1% of children between 13 and 18 years old. Research shows that children with untreated anxiety disorders are at high risk of performing poorly in school, missing out on important social experiences and engaging in substance abuse.

Common anxiety signs and symptoms include:

- Feeling nervous, restless or tense
- Having a sense of impending danger or panic
- Increased heart rate and rapid breathing (hyperventilation)
- Sweating or trembling
- Feeling weak or tired
- Difficulty concentrating and sleeping
- Experiencing gastrointestinal (GI) problems

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting

40 MILLION ADULTS

or 18.1% of the population.

Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, but

LESS THAN 40%

of those affected receive treatment.





Depression

It's not uncommon for someone with an anxiety disorder to also suffer from depression, and vice versa. In fact, nearly one-half of those diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

Depression is a common but serious mood disorder that affects how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating or working. To be diagnosed with depression, the symptoms must be present for at least two weeks.

Some common signs and symptoms of depression include:

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood
- Irritability
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Loss of interest in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Feeling restless or having trouble sitting still
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes

Some people may experience many of these symptoms while others will only experience a few. Symptoms may also vary depending on the stage of the illness.

Effects on everyday life and relationships

Depression is a serious mental illness that can lead to problems in your professional and personal life. At work, it can cause you to lose focus easily, hinder your productivity and affect your ability to interact with co-workers. And because depression can trigger overwhelming exhaustion, loneliness, hopelessness and detachment, it can make it hard to maintain your social life and connect with your family and friends.

Depression is not a one-size-fits-all condition. Everyone experiences depression differently. Left untreated, depression can lead to a cycle of self-defeating behaviors that ultimately can negatively impact relationships, your health and your quality of life.

There are things you can do to manage the symptoms of depression, such as exercising, eating a healthy diet, getting enough sleep and spending time doing things you enjoy. The most important thing you can do is to seek help.

Finding the Right Provider

Different types of mental health providers can help you with different concerns. If you need assistance finding a provider, you can use Medical Mutual's Provider Search tool, or call Customer Care at the number listed on your member ID card. You can also ask your primary care provider for a referral. Some mental health providers offer telehealth visits where you can connect virtually using a smartphone, tablet or laptop.

If you have mental health questions, you can also call the Medical Mutual Nurse Line toll free at 1-888-912-0636, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Questions to ask a provider

You might need to try a few different providers before you find one that feels like a good fit. Try to remain open and positive during this process. Asking a few of these questions at your first appointment or when calling to schedule an appointment can help you decide if the provider is right for you:

- Do you offer telehealth visits?
- Are you willing to communicate with my PCP and other healthcare providers to coordinate my care?
- How long will my therapy sessions last?
- Will I have to talk about anything I do not want to?
- How soon might I start to feel better?
- Do you have someone I can contact during off-hours to help me in case of an emergency?



Getting Help for Yourself or Someone You Care About

Fear of treatment, shame and embarrassment keep many people from seeking the help they need. However, if you think you need help managing anxiety or depression, treatment will help improve your quality of life. Sometimes it is hard to know where to begin. Here are a few things you can do to get started.

- Talk to your primary care provider (PCP) about your mental health challenges.
- Confide in a trusted friend or family member who can help you talk through your options.
- Seek out counseling with a mental health provider.
- Call your employer's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if they offer one. Many EAPs provide a free phone consultation and short-term mental health counseling.
- Find information online from organizations such as Mental Health America (MHA) or the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

If you have concerns about a friend or family member, offering your support can make all the difference. To start, you should have a conversation in a place where the person feels safe and comfortable. Speak in a calm tone, express your concern and ask if the person feels comfortable talking to you. Be sure to actively listen and pay close attention to the person's body language and verbal responses. Then reassure them that they're not alone and there are ways they can feel better.

If You Need Help Right Away

For more information or to get help, call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) to locate treatment services or resources. This is a free, confidential service available 24/7, 365 days a year for individuals and families facing mental health or substance use issues.

If you or someone you know is in danger of harming themselves, call the National Suicide Prevention Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). If the danger is immediate, call 911.

Note: Mental health services, such as office visits, telehealth visits and inpatient or outpatient treatment, are covered by your Medical Mutual plan. Depending on your plan, a copay may be required. Please refer to your Summary of Benefits and Coverage or your certificate book for details. These documents are available on My Health Plan under Benefits & Coverage.



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