

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is mental health?

Your mental health is the health of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Mental health affects how you deal with life and plan for the future, just like physical health does. It affects your relationships with family, friends, and others.

### How does mental health affect your overall health?

Your mental health is very important. Mental health affects your ability to cope with life and to stay healthy and safe. If you have problems with mental health, you may have

- trouble dealing with school or work
- substance use problems
- risky behavior, such as driving too fast or having sex without [birth control](#)

Mental health problems can also cause physical symptoms, such as

- severe [menstrual period](#) cramps
- stomach pain
- sleep problems
- low energy and lack of focus

Many adults with mental health problems had symptoms at a young age. Early treatment can help prevent problems later.

## What is a mental health disorder?

A mental health disorder is a pattern of thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that interferes with your normal routine. For example, you might cry a lot, feel very tired, or sleep a lot. You might have mood swings or a hard time concentrating. Or you might do things you would normally avoid, like driving too fast or hurting yourself.

The pattern usually lasts more than a few hours or days. For example, one sign of [depression](#) is feeling sad or depressed for at least 2 weeks in a row.

## What are common types of mental health disorders?

Mental health disorders include

- anxiety disorders, such as anxiety and extreme worry
- mood disorders, such as severe mood swings
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which makes it very difficult to stay still and pay attention
- behavior problems, such as breaking rules and destroying property

## What are anxiety disorders?

Anxiety disorders can include extreme worry and anxious feelings. These feelings can be more intense, last longer, and happen more often than usual.

Different types of anxiety disorders include the following:

- **Generalized anxiety disorder**—You feel anxious much of the time. You may have a hard time controlling your feelings or worries. You also may feel restless, have a hard time concentrating, and get annoyed or tired easily. You may have physical problems as well, such as stomach pain, muscle pain, and trouble sleeping.
- **Social anxiety disorder**—You fear social situations. You may feel nervous at social events or when you meet new people.

- **Panic attacks**—You feel sudden, intense fear. You may also have a racing heart, dizziness, or chest pain. Panic disorder is when you have many panic attacks.
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**—You feel you have to constantly clean things, check them, or repeat other actions many times. You may also have constant thoughts that are hard to stop.

A condition called [post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#) can also cause anxiety and mood problems. PTSD is a long-lasting reaction to trauma.

## What are mood disorders?

Mood disorders happen when your feelings change much more often or last longer than you would expect. You may feel very active and energetic at times. Or you might feel “down,” sad, irritable, and bored by activities you usually enjoy. Mood disorders include the following:

- **Adjustment disorder**—You have trouble coping with a stressful event that happened recently.
- **Depression**—You feel down, irritable, and less interested in normal activities for at least 2 weeks. You may cry often or have trouble sleeping. You may also eat much less or more than normal.
- **Bipolar disorder**—You may be very energetic and active for several days in a row. You may have difficulty stopping an activity or sleeping at night. You may also have mood swings or get depressed at times.

## What is ADHD?

ADHD is a condition in which you are active and easily distracted. You may have a hard time paying attention. You may also act without thinking or do inappropriate things. Everyone feels like this sometimes, but having ADHD means it happens more often than expected for your age. ADHD is typically diagnosed in childhood but can last into adulthood. It usually lasts at least 6 months.

## What are behavior disorders?

Behavior disorders are conditions that are typically diagnosed in children or teens. These disorders may cause them to hurt or bother other people or their property. They may hurt people and animals. They may act immature and do dangerous things. Behavior disorders include the following:

- **Oppositional-defiant disorder**—Children or teens often get angry, argue with adults or refuse to follow rules.
- **Conduct disorder**—Children or teens break rules and hurt people or animals. They might steal, destroy other people’s property, run away, or skip school.

## What are other common mental health problems?

Other common mental health problems include eating disorders, substance use disorders, and self-harm (hurting yourself). A substance use disorder means you are addicted to drugs or alcohol. It can be part of another mental health problem. Eating disorders include [anorexia nervosa](#) , [bulimia nervosa](#) , and binge-eating disorder. Self-harm or self-injury can include cutting, burning, or doing other things to damage your body.

## Can mental health disorders be treated?

Yes, mental health problems can be treated. The main treatments are counseling and medication. You may take [antidepressants](#) , anti-anxiety drugs, or other medications. A type of counseling called [cognitive behavioral therapy \(CBT\)](#) helps you change unhealthy thoughts and feelings. Lifestyle changes and other nonmedical treatments, such as exercise, diet changes, and meditation, can help as well. Support from family and friends is also important.

## How can I get help?

First, talk with someone about what you are thinking and feeling. Tell a friend, parent, doctor, or other health care professional. You can also talk with a teacher, counselor, or religious leader.

Call 911 if you are thinking about hurting yourself or someone else. You may also call [988](#) to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline or use the Lifeline Chat and Text at

<https://988lifeline.org/chat>. A counselor can talk with you and help you find resources. Read the [Resources](#) section below for more support options.

## How can I help a friend or family member?

It is important to learn the warning signs of mental health problems. Pay attention if someone is

- acting down or depressed for more than 2 weeks
- hurting themselves, such as by cutting or burning
- talking about suicide, taking extreme risks, or showing intense fear or worry
- having severe mood swings or not eating normally, such as skipping meals
- using alcohol or drugs often, being drunk or high a lot, or always wanting to drink and get high
- acting much different than usual, with personality changes
- unable to concentrate, focus, stay still, or even sleep

You can tell your friend “I’ve noticed ...” and then tell them what you notice about their behavior or mood. Ask if you can help them talk with someone they trust. You may need to call 911 or 988 in an emergency. For example, you can call for help if your friend talks about hurting themselves or wants to drive drunk.

Ask your friend how you can help. They might need a ride somewhere. Or they might need you to listen or just sit with them. You can invite them to spend time with you, even if you are not sure they will come. Avoid telling them to “get over it” or “toughen up.”

You can also learn about your friend or family member’s mental health problem. This could help you give them more support.

## Glossary

**Anorexia Nervosa:** An eating disorder that causes a person to severely restrict food so they lose weight. People with this disorder fear weight gain and have a distorted body image.

**Antidepressants:** Drugs that are used to treat depression.

**Birth Control:** Devices or medications used to prevent pregnancy.

**Bulimia Nervosa:** An eating disorder in which a person binges on food and then forces vomiting or abuses laxatives.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** A type of psychotherapy. During CBT, you learn specific skills that help you change the way you think about and cope with problems.

**Depression:** Feelings of sadness for periods of at least 2 weeks.

**Menstrual Period:** The monthly shedding of blood and tissue from the uterus.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** A mental health disorder that some people develop after experiencing trauma, such as exposure to violence, death, serious injury, or sexual assault.

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## Resources

### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

[988](https://988lifeline.org)

<https://988lifeline.org>

Lifeline Chat and Text: <https://988lifeline.org/chat>

Free help from trained counselors by phone or live online chat. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you or someone you love has thoughts of suicide, call or chat for help.

### Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741 in the United States or Canada to reach a trained counselor.

[www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

This service is free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Helpline (SAMHSA)

[800-662-HELP \(4357\)](tel:800-662-HELP)

[800-487-4889 \(TTY\)](tel:800-487-4889)

[www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline)

Free, confidential help in English and Spanish. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Anxiety and Depression Association of America: Understand the Facts**

<https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety>

Anxiety and Depression Association of America. Free information on many types of anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders, PTSD, and more.

## If you have further questions, contact your ob-gyn.

Don't have an ob-gyn? [Learn how to find a doctor near you.](#)

FAQ525

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