

# May is Mental Health Awareness Month!



## What is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

## Why is mental health important for overall health?

Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health. For example, depression increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Similarly, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk for mental illness.



## Can your mental health change over time?

Yes, it's important to remember that a person's mental health can change over time, depending on many factors. When the demands placed on a person exceed their resources and coping abilities, their mental health could be impacted.



## How common are mental illnesses?

- More than 1 in 5 US adults live with a mental illness.
- Over 1 in 5 youth (ages 13-18) either currently or at some point during their life, have had a seriously debilitating mental illness.
- About 1 in 25 U.S. adults lives with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.

## What causes mental illness?

There is no single cause for mental illness. A number of factors can contribute to risk for mental illness, such as:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences, such as trauma or a history of abuse (for example, child abuse, sexual assault, witnessing violence, etc.)
- Experiences related to other ongoing (chronic) medical conditions, such as cancer or diabetes
- About 1 in 25 U.S. adults lives with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.
- Biological factors or chemical imbalances in the brain.
- Use of alcohol or drugs.
- Having feelings of loneliness or isolation.

# Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress!

- Take breaks from social media. It's good to be informed, but constant information about negative events can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple times a day and disconnecting from phone, TV, and computer screens for a while.
- Take care of your body:
  - Eat healthy. Have fruits and vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and low-fat or no-fat dairy. Limit foods with unhealthy fats, salt, and added sugars.
  - Get enough sleep. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day to help you sleep better. Adults need 7 or more hours per night.
  - Move more and sit less. Every little bit of physical activity helps. Start small and build up to 2 ½ hours a week. You can break it into smaller amounts such as 20 to 30 minutes a day.
- Limit alcohol intake. Choose not to drink, or drink in moderation on days you drink alcohol. Moderation means having 2 drinks or less a day for men or 1 drink or less for women.
- Avoid using illegal drugs or prescription drugs in ways other than prescribed. Don't take someone else's prescription.
- Avoid smoking, vaping, and the use of other tobacco products. People can and do quit smoking for good.
- Continue with regular health appointments, tests, screenings, and vaccinations.
- Make time to unwind.
  - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Connect with others.
  - Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
  - Connect with your community-based or faith-based organizations.



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