



Recognizing signs of mental illness

Mental illness can look and feel like a variety of symptoms. It is important to understand and be able to differentiate between the different types of mental health.

Depression affects people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of depression symptoms ranging from mild to severe. Signs of depression and anxiety vary between individuals and between the types of depression or anxiety disorder that they experience.

Depressive episodes are classified as mild, moderate and severe major depressive disorders based on the number, type and severity of symptoms the person experiences, as well as the impact that the depression has on their ability to function. For a health care provider to diagnose an individual with depression, the provider may use tools such as questionnaires and will work with the individual to choose a treatment plan.

Persons with depression typically feel down most of the time for at least 2 weeks.

Signs of depression include:

- Lasting feelings of unhappiness or hopelessness
- Loss of interest in things or activities that once were enjoyed
- Feeling tired, sleeping all of the time or sleeping poorly
- Aches and pains
- Loss of appetite or sex drive
- Trouble concentrating, restlessness or irritability
- Memory lapses or trouble making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide or attempts at suicide

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People with chronic depression may also experience persistent physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomach problems or pain that do not respond to treatment or have no other cause.

People with **generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)** experience excessive anxiety or worry, most days for at least six months. Worries can include anything, and even the most mundane worries can cause significant problems in their lives. Generalized anxiety disorder symptoms include:

- Restlessness, worrying or being on-edge
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep

People with **panic disorder** have recurrent, unexpected, periods of intense fear that come on quickly and reach their peak within minutes. During a panic attack, people may experience:

- A pounding heartbeat
- Sweating
- Shaking
- Shortness of breath
- The feeling that something bad is going to happen soon.

Phobias are fears of specific objects (like needles) or situations (like flying) that are out of proportion to the actual danger caused by the situation or object. People with a phobia tend to:

- Excessively or irrationally worry about encountering the feared object or situation
- Take active steps to avoid whatever it is they fear
- Experience immediate intense anxiety when in the presence of the feared object or situation

Bipolar disorder causes wide mood swings - from overly “high” and/or irritable to sad and hopeless, and then back again, often with periods of normal mood in between. Severe changes in energy and behavior go along with these changes in mood. The periods of highs and lows are called episodes of mania and depression. Signs and symptoms of mania include:

- Increased energy, activity and restlessness
- Excessively “high,” overly good, euphoric mood
- Extreme irritability
- Racing thoughts and talking very fast, jumping from one idea to another
- Distractibility, can’t concentrate well
- Little sleep needed
- Unrealistic beliefs in one’s abilities and powers
- Poor judgment, spending sprees
- A lasting period of behavior that is different from usual
- Increased sexual drive
- Abuse of drugs, particularly cocaine, alcohol, and sleeping medication
- Provocative, intrusive, or aggressive behavior
- Denial that anything is wrong

References

For additional services and tools, visit **walgreens.com/findcare**

If you or someone you know needs help now, call 911 or contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline 24/7 by calling or texting 988 or via online chat at 988lifeline.org.

1. <https://www.walgreens.com/rx-healthanswer/health/p2/a/3200001/managing-depression/2448985>
2. <https://www.walgreens.com/rx-healthanswer/health/p2/a/3200001/anxiety-and-depression/2448980>

