



✓ **READY FOR LIFE**



Mental Health



Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being. 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.

[Check out the CDC's statistics and information on Mental Health and what you need to know.](#)



What is mental illness?

Mental illnesses are conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. Such conditions may be occasional or long-lasting (chronic) and affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day.



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Although the terms are often used interchangeably, poor mental health and mental illness are not the same things. A person can experience poor mental health and not be diagnosed with a mental illness. Likewise, a person diagnosed with a mental illness can experience periods of [physical, mental, and social well-being](#).



Why is mental health important for overall health?

Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health. Mental illness, especially depression, increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. 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. For example, if someone [is working long hours](#), [caring for an ill relative](#) or experiencing economic hardship they may experience poor mental health.



How common are mental illnesses?

Mental illnesses are among the most common health conditions in the United States.

- More than 50% will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.³
- 1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness in a given year.
- 1 in 5 children, either currently or at some point during their life, have had a seriously debilitating mental illness.
- 1 in 25 Americans 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:

- [Early adverse life 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 condition CDC-pdf](#), such as [cancer](#) or diabetes.
- [Biological factors, such as genes](#) or chemical imbalances in the brain
- Use of alcohol or recreational drugs
- [Having few friends](#)
- Having feeling of loneliness or isolation

Mental Health and the Pandemic

- [Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19 | CDC](#)
- [mental health in a pandemic - Google Search](#)
- [The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use | KFF](#)

As policymakers continue to discuss further actions to alleviate the burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be important to consider how the increased need for mental health and substance use services will likely persist long term, even if new cases and deaths due to the novel coronavirus subside.



March of Dimes – Blanket Change!

Mental health challenges are among the most common complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Become an advocate and call on policymakers to create #BlanketChange by prioritizing the mental health of our nation's moms and moms-to-be.

[TAKE ACTION - Become an advocate for our nation's moms.](#)