

Signs of a mental health concern

Trying to tell the difference between what expected behaviors are and what might be symptoms of a mental illness isn't always easy. No simple test can let someone know if there is a mental health disorder, if the actions and thoughts might be typical behaviors or even the result of a physical illness. Each mental health concern has its own set of symptoms, but some common signs of mental health disorders in adults and adolescents can include the following:

- Excessive worry or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable “highs” or feelings of euphoria, followed by very low mood swings
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities or difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits, frequently feeling tired or having low energy
- Changes in eating habits, such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Decrease in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality (“lack of insight”)
- Use of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomachaches and vague and ongoing “aches and pains”)
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance (mostly in adolescents)

Symptoms of mental illness in children

Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Their most obvious symptoms are behavioral because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions.

Symptoms in children may include:

- Changes in school performance
- Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance, fighting to avoid going to bed or school
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call the national suicide prevention hotline at 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255). If you are in an immediate medical crisis, please call 911.



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