

Warning signs of mental illness

Mental illness affects many people. It can include conditions like depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder. Many times, a person will show early signs of mental illness. This means they can get medical help before the condition becomes serious.



CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR

Sometimes a person's actions or personality seems to change when they have a mental illness. Some signs include:

- Mood swings. Mood and attitude may shift back and forth from happy to sad or angry.
- Fear or feeling uneasy. A person may feel afraid, anxious or panicked about everyday things.
- Lack of interest. They may not want to do activities or be around people.
- Trouble with work performance or schoolwork.

CHANGES IN THOUGHTS

- Feeling out of control. They may be unable to manage daily tasks or stress.
- Clouded thinking. It may feel like they can't concentrate on tasks or remember things.
- Feeling numb. They may have trouble feeling emotions about anything.
- Not being connected with reality. A person's thoughts or actions may not be logical or make sense.

PHYSICAL CHANGES

Mental illness can affect the body, too. Some changes to watch for include:

- Feeling very tired or sleeping much more than usual.
- Getting very little sleep or an inability to sleep.
- Eating much more than usual.
- Eating less than usual or not at all.
- Changes in senses like smell, touch or sight.
- Unexplained injuries, like repeated cuts or scratches. These can be signs of self-harm.

GET MEDICAL CARE

If you notice these signs in yourself, talk with your doctor. Mental illness is a real illness, and there are treatments available to help. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to tell someone.

If these changes happen to a loved one, talk with them about getting medical care. Tell them you are here for them and want to help.

If you or a loved one has thoughts of suicide, seek emergency care or go to an emergency room.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians