

Warning signs that a senior adult should seek geriatric psychiatric help:

- Abuse of medications, alcohol or drugs
- Anger, agitation or aggression
- Changes in behavior, eating or sleeping patterns
- Confusion
- Crying spells
- Decreased energy or appetite
- Depression
- Difficulty controlling impulses
- Disorientation
- Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- Grief
- Hallucinations
- Inability to concentrate or focus
- Loss of interest in activities, appearance or self-care
- Memory loss
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Withdrawal from family and friends

# Knowledge is Power: Mental Health

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**Good mental health is within most people's reach and is often a matter of awareness and prevention. Even though most mental illnesses are biological, there are steps people can take to prevent mental illness from occurring or getting worse.**

Anxiety and depression are the most common mental illnesses. Knowing the signs and symptoms of these and other illnesses, and knowing when, where and how to ask for help are the keys to successful prevention and treatment.

## **Adult Mental Health**

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Warning signs of mental illness in adults can include:

- Confused thinking
- Prolonged depression (sadness or irritability)
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows
- Excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- Social withdrawal
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Strong feelings of anger
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Suicidal thoughts
- Denial of obvious problems
- Numerous unexplained physical ailments
- Substance abuse

If these, or other unusual or troubling behaviors, persist for two weeks or more, it may signal a mental illness that, with timely treatment, can be successfully managed or cured.

With proper treatment 70 to 90 percent of people with mental illness experience significant improvement in their symptoms and quality of life.

There are a few simple things that people can incorporate into their lives to help maintain good mental health:

- Take care of your physical health
- Practice proper nutrition
- Get plenty of rest
- Exercise
- Consume moderate amounts of caffeine and alcohol

Try working these positive ideas into your routine:

**Establish a regular meditation or exercise practice**—solitary or with a group, what's important is that you take time away from the hectic pace of your daily routine.

**Nurture your friendships**—it's well known that the support and companionship of others enhances health and longevity.

**Organize yourself**—prioritize tasks and don't over-schedule; it's okay if the laundry doesn't get done today, that's what tomorrow is for.

**Take time to learn something new**—a language, a skill, a hobby.

**Teach others**—volunteer for an organization that shares your values and interests.

**Be kind to yourself**—recognize your gifts, celebrate them and then extend that kindness to others.

## **Geriatric Mental Health**

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One out of four senior adults suffers from mental health issues, yet less than half of them seek the treatment that can help them live happier and healthier lives. It's a common misconception that depression is a normal part of aging, however, for 80 percent of seniors diagnosed with depression, treatment has proven effective. Diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues can greatly improve the quality of life for senior adults.

The most common mental health concerns for the elderly include:

- Alzheimer's Disease
- Anxiety
- Behavioral disturbances
- Confusion
- Decision-making
- Dementia
- Depression
- Disorientation
- Grief
- Medication problems
- Memory loss
- Pain management
- Personality disorders
- Psychiatric problems resulting from other medical issues
- Psychological and social issues
- Sleep problems
- Substance abuse
- Withdrawal