

# Know the Signs. Know the Warnings.

Distinguishing certain behaviors from possible signs of a mental health condition isn't always easy. There's no simple test to label one's actions and thoughts as mental illness, typical behavior, or the result of a physical ailment.

## Common Signs of Mental Health Conditions

Each condition has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental health condition in adults and adolescents can include the following:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking and/or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged and/or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding and/or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits and/or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased, or lack of, appetite
- 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" or anosognosia)
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, and vague and ongoing "aches and pains")
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance

## Common Signs of Mental Health Conditions in Children and Young Adults

Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, children's most obvious symptoms are behavioral. Symptoms in children may include the following:

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