

Bathroom Briefs

Your line to good health!

Developed by: Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
Section, Forsyth County Department of Public Health



Mental Health Basics

The term mental health is commonly used in reference to mental illness. However, knowledge in the field has progressed to a level that appropriately differentiates the two. Although mental health and mental illness are related, they represent different psychological states.

Mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” It is estimated that only about 17% of U.S. adults are considered to be in a state of optimal mental health. There is emerging evidence that positive mental health is associated with improved health outcomes.

Mental illness is defined as “collectively all diagnosable mental disorders” or “health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.”² Depression is the most common type of mental illness, affecting more than 26% of the U.S. adult population. It has been estimated that by the year 2020, depression will be the second leading cause of disability throughout the world, trailing only ischemic heart disease.

Evidence has shown that mental disorders, especially depressive disorders, are strongly related to the occurrence, successful treatment, and course of many chronic diseases including diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and obesity⁵ and many risk behaviors for chronic disease; such as, physical inactivity, smoking, excessive drinking, and insufficient sleep.

Burden of Mental Illness

Depression:

- According to the World Health Organization, unipolar depression was the third most important cause of disease burden worldwide in 2004. Unipolar depression was in “eighth place in low-income countries, but at first place in middle- and high-income countries.”
- Significantly greater percentages of lifetime major depression have been reported among women (11.7%) than men (5.6%).

Examining ethnic differences reveals lifetime percentages of depression of 6.52% among whites and 4.57% among blacks and 5.17% among Hispanics.

Anxiety:

- Anxiety disorders, which include panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, phobias, and separation anxiety disorder, are the most common class of mental disorders present in the general population.
- The estimated lifetime prevalence of any anxiety disorder is over 15%, while the 12-month prevalence is more than 10%.

One study estimated the annual cost of anxiety disorders in the United States to be approximately \$42.3 billion in the 1990s, a majority of which was due to non-psychiatric medical treatment costs. This estimate focused on short-term effects and did not include the effect of outcomes such as the increased risk of other disorders.

Bipolar Disorder:

- The National Comorbidity Study reported a lifetime prevalence of nearly 4% for bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder is more common in women than men, with a ratio of approximately 3:2. The median

age of onset for bipolar disorder is 25 years, with men having an earlier age of onset than women.

- Bipolar disorder has been deemed the most expensive behavioral health care diagnosis, costing more than twice as much as depression per affected individual. Total costs largely arise from indirect costs and are attributable to lost productivity, in turn arising from absenteeism and presenteeism.

For every dollar allocated to outpatient care for persons with bipolar disorder, \$1.80 is spent on inpatient care, suggesting early intervention and improved prevention management could decrease the financial impact of this illness.

Schizophrenia:

- Worldwide prevalence estimates range between 0.5% and 1%. Age of first episode is typically younger among men (about 21 years of age) than women (27 years). Of persons with schizophrenia, by age 30, 9 out of 10 men, but only 2 out of 10 women, will manifest the illness.
- Persons with schizophrenia pose a high risk for suicide. Approximately one-third will attempt suicide and, eventually, about 1 out of 10 will take their own lives.

The economic burden of schizophrenia is particularly great during the first year following the index episode, relative to the third year onwards. This finding suggests the need for improved monitoring of persons with schizophrenia upon initial diagnosis.

Frequent Mental Distress:

Frequent mental distress is defined based on the response to the following quality of life question, “Now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?” Frequent mental distress is identified as a report of 14 or more days of poor mental health in the past 30 days.

Alzheimer’s Disease:

- Alzheimer’s disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and is the fifth leading cause among persons age 65 years and older.
- Up to 5.3 million Americans currently have Alzheimer’s disease.
- By 2050, the number is expected to more than double due to the aging of the population.

If you or someone you know, experiences or needs more information about Mental Health, please call

Alzheimer's Association 336.725.3085
Daymark Recovery Services 336.607.8523
Mental Health Assoc. In Forsyth Co. 336.768.3880
Novant Health (Forsyth Medical Ctr) 800.718.3550
Wake Forest Baptist Health 336.716.WAKE