

# Mental health and physical illness



We know there are many health conditions. But what isn't widely known is nearly one in three people with a long-term physical health condition also has a mental health problem, most often depression or anxiety. Whilst it is natural to feel low, worried or stressed when you are unwell. Someone with a long term condition is more likely to experience mental health issues. Caring for mental health and wellbeing is also just as important as looking after your physical wellbeing.

## How physical illness might affect mental health

Having a long term physical illness or chronic condition can lead to:

- ◆ stress, worry or anxiety, especially over appointments or test results
- ◆ low self-esteem, or feelings around discrimination or stigma
- ◆ social isolation or loneliness, possibly due to long stays in hospital or having to stay home more
- ◆ anger, frustration, or grief, especially if being ill stops us from socializing or doing things we enjoy
- ◆ sleep problems, which might be caused by pain, sickness, or from the side effects of some medicines
- ◆ some less common mental illnesses, such as eating disorders, or psychosis
- ◆ In some cases PTSD

## Why this may happen

It is said that there can be some links to why this may happen and they are the following:

- ◆ **Biological Links:** Some illnesses directly affect the brain (e.g., MS, Parkinson's) or endocrine system (e.g., hypothyroidism).
- ◆ **Coping Burden:** Managing a physical illness is demanding, leading to mental fatigue and distress.
- ◆ **Lifestyle Changes:** Reduced activity, social engagement, and changes in diet can impact mood.
- ◆ **Medication Side Effects:** Some drugs can trigger mental health symptoms.
- ◆ **Traumatic medical events**

## What can help

These are some tips for mental health while dealing with physical illness or long term conditions

- ◆ **Talk about how being ill makes you feel :** Talking to someone you trust or others in the same boat as yourself can help. By helping you understand and helping you feel not so isolated or lonely
- ◆ **Ask for practical help:** If mental or physical health symptoms are bothering you then try to be open with family, friends or carers. They can help with shopping, other household chores or even going to appointments with you or taking you to and from.
- ◆ **Try relaxation or mindfulness methods:** These can sometimes help distract you from the feelings of worry, anxiety or stress. Meditation may help or something called Reiki.
- ◆ **Pace yourself and be sure to take rest breaks** this can help with that feeling of burning out.
- ◆ **Talking therapies** are also suggested so ask your GP about it or you can look online for things like Samaritans .
- ◆ **Contact an organization that supports people with your health condition.**
- ◆ **Groups like us (GOAL) is also a safe space to talk about conditions.**

Here are some important links:

<https://www.reiki.org/faqs/what-reiki>

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/lifes-challenges/health-issues/#physical-affect-mental>

On the other side of this page is a list of other mental health conditions and where to find more information.



# Mental health types

- ⇒ Anger
- ⇒ Anxiety and panic attacks
- ⇒ Bipolar Disorders
- ⇒ Body Dysmorphia
- ⇒ Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)
- ⇒ Depression
- ⇒ Dissociation and dissociative disorders
- ⇒ Eating problems
- ⇒ Hearing voices
- ⇒ Hoarding
- ⇒ Hypomania and mania
- ⇒ Loneliness
- ⇒ Obsessive-compulsive disorders (OCD)
- ⇒ Panic attacks
- ⇒ Paranoia
- ⇒ Personality disorder
- ⇒ Phobias
- ⇒ Postnatal depression & perinatal mental health
- ⇒ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- ⇒ Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD)
- ⇒ Psychosis
- ⇒ Schizoaffective disorder
- ⇒ Schizophrenia
- ⇒ Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)
- ⇒ Self-esteem
- ⇒ Self-harm
- ⇒ Sleep problems
- ⇒ Stress
- ⇒ Suicidal thoughts
- ⇒ Suicide attempt - how to cope after
- ⇒ Tardive dyskinesia
- ⇒ Trauma

To find more information about each of these on this list please visit:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/>

We are not official help so if you are struggling please see your GP or speak to someone.