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Mental Health is an important part of your overall health



Mental health and mental illness are often used synonymously – but they are not the same. One factor that does play a role in both of these psychological states though is physical health.

It is estimated that only about 17 percent of U.S. adults are considered to be in a state of optimal mental health.¹ Mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”² Improved health outcomes can often be associated with positive mental health.

Mental illness is an important health problem and is often associated with physical health, as well. 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

Mental illness accounts for more disability in developed countries than any other group of illnesses, including cancer and heart disease according to the World Health Organization.³ Mental disorders and chronic conditions, such as arthritis, are among the most common causes of disability in the United States with depression being the most common type of mental illness, affecting more than 26 percent of the U.S. adult population.³

Although overlooked in the past, research has revealed the link between the overall physical and mental health of individuals. Many associations exist between mental illness and chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma and arthritis. One common finding is that people who suffer from a chronic disease are more likely to also suffer from depression.⁴

Evidence has shown that mental health disorders – most often depression – are strongly associated with the risk, development, management, progression and outcome of serious chronic disease and health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart disease and cancer. This association appears to be caused most often by mental health disorders that precede chronic disease, but the diagnosis and daily challenges of managing a chronic condition may lead to the development of a mental illness, such as depression. Some types of medical therapy for mental illness can increase the risk of developing chronic conditions, such as diabetes and/or high blood pressure, also.

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As more research is being done in these areas, it is important to remember that both mental and physical health have a profound effect on one's quality of life and general feeling of well-being. Take a moment today and learn more about how you, a family member or friend might be affected by chronic disease and mental health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

References

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