

HOW DO YOU SUSPECT MENTAL ILLNESS IN A PERSON?

Signs and symptoms of mental illness can vary, depending on the mental disorder and severity of the condition.

Sometimes symptoms of a mental health disorder appear as physical problems, such as stomach pain, back pain, headaches, or other unexplained aches and pains.

Some signs and symptoms that are seen in mental disorders may include:

- Feeling sad and unhappy most of the time.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Excessive fears.
- Unnecessary feelings of guilt.
- Severe mood changes.
- Easy irritability.
- The tendency to react with violence/ irritability.
- Withdrawal from friends and activities.
- Inability to work or study.
- Loss of appetite or excessive eating.
- Decreased sex drive.
- Feeling tired and lethargic.
- Insomnia (difficulty sleeping) or sleeping too long.
- Paranoia
- Inability to maintain relationships.
- Drug abuse.
- Detachment from reality.
- Disorganized speech (talking meaningless sentences that don't make sense).
- Delusions (false and sometimes unrealistic beliefs in which the person refuses to stop believing, despite providing proof).
- Inability to cope with daily problems or stress.
- Hallucinations (having unreal sensations such as hearing voices, seeing things, feeling sensations on the skin, having strange odors that aren't real, etc.).
- Consuming excessive alcohol.
- Suicidal thinking (requires immediate medical attention).

Certain factors may increase your risk of mental illness:

- Family history of mental illness.
- Previous history of mental illness.
- Intense psychological or physical stress due to stressful situations in life such as financial problems, loss of a job, death of a loved one, or a divorce.
- Traumatic experiences such as sexual assault, war, etc.
- Unpleasant childhood due to bullying, abuse, or neglect.
- Chronic medical conditions, especially diseases that are associated with chronic pain and diseases affecting quality of life, such as rheumatoid arthritis, cancer, fibromyalgia, etc.
- Trauma to the brain.
- Alcoholism and/or drug abuse

When to see a doctor

If you have any signs or symptoms of a mental illness, see your GP to initiate treatment and then see a Mental Health Professional. Most mental illnesses don't improve on their own, and if untreated, a mental illness may get worse with time and cause serious problems.

For further information or assistance, please contact the Platinum Health Mental Health Services on 014 590 1700 or alternatively, the EAP Counsellor Line 010 133 0525, which is available to members 24/7.