



Canadian Mental  
Health Association

Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale

# Mental Health for All Fact Sheet

## Mental Health is Everyone's Concern

Next time you're in line at the supermarket or at a bus stop, look around you. How many people do you see? 5? 10? What if we told you that research shows that two of those 10 people have or will have a mental illness? Mental illness can affect anyone, at any time.

### What is it?

Most of us have heard the *terms* mental illness or mental disorder or psychiatric condition. These terms are used to describe a wide range of different conditions but what they have in common is that they all affect a person's emotions, thoughts and behaviours — how they see themselves, see the world around them, and how they interact in that world. The key difference from "having a bad day or week" is both the duration and magnitude of the impacts on your life. There are many different kinds of mental disorders.

One in five Canadians, over the course of their lives, will experience a mental illness and what that ultimately means is that every single family in Canada will in some way be affected. There is nobody in Canada who can stand up and say, "Not my family, not my aunts or uncles or cousins or grandparents, children, siblings, spouse or self." And yet the reluctance to talk about mental illness, to acknowledge it openly, to treat it as a form of human suffering like any other illness, relates in part to how threatening this set of illnesses is to our sense of who we are. Mental illness cuts across all age, racial, religious, or socio-economic categories.

### The Impacts Are Staggering?

The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that by the year 2020 depression will become the No. 2 cause worldwide of years lost due to disability. That's a profound impact.

The number of suicides in Canada is almost 4,000 people a year. For people aged 15 to 24 in Canada, suicide is the No. 2 cause of death.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) mental illness is the number one leading cause of disability in the world and five of the 10 leading causes of disability are related to mental disorders.

Mental illness costs the Canadian economy a staggering \$51-billion a year, and each day 500,000 people will miss work due to mental health problems.

Each year employers and insurers spend a whopping \$8.5 billion on long-term disability claims related to mental illness.

Mental illness is the number one cause of disability in Canada, accounting for nearly 30% of disability claims and 70% of total costs. Mental health disorders in the workplace cost Canadian companies nearly 14% of their net annual profits and up to \$16 billion annually.

The unemployment rate among people with serious mental illness is 70 - 90%. There is a 60% drop in family income when a breadwinner is diagnosed with mental illness.

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## Types of Mental Illnesses?

**Mood disorders** – involve changes and disruptions in a person's mood and emotions. Depression and bipolar disorder are examples of mood disorders.

**Anxiety disorders** – are the most common type of mental disorder. They cause people to be overly anxious and afraid of situations or events that most people consider normal. Panic disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder are anxiety disorders.

**Schizophrenia** – involves people losing the ability to know what's real and what isn't (this feature is called psychosis). Schizophrenia also makes it difficult for people to think, speak and interact in an organized way. Psychosis is not just a part of schizophrenia, but may also be seen on its own, or with other disorders like mood disorders.

**Eating disorders** – involve a distorted body image along with serious behaviours to manage food and weight, making it difficult to nourish oneself properly. Eating disorders can be life-threatening. Examples of eating disorders include anorexia and bulimia.

**Personality disorders** – affect the way a person acts, feels and gets along with other people. They can also cause people to be more impulsive. Borderline personality disorder and antisocial personality disorder are examples of personality disorder.

**Substance use disorders** (commonly called addictions) – occur when a person becomes dependent on a substance such as alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

**Dementia** – involves the loss of brain cells and results in loss of memory, judgment and reasoning, along with changes in mood, behaviour and communication abilities (beyond what might be seen in normal aging). Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia.

**Attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder** (ADD or ADHD) – can be diagnosed in adults but is usually found in children and youth and affects their ability to focus their attention. This condition may also include hyperactivity, which is when a person becomes easily over-excited.

## Do You Need More Information?

Mental Health Week is a designated week created by **The Canadian Mental Health Association** (CMHA) to talk, reflect, engage and celebrate mental health for all. The theme of Mental Health For All represents the right of every Canadian to enjoy and have the best possible mental health. It's this attitude that represents ways in which all Canadians can actively protect and preserve their mental health at home, work and in their own community. CMHA develops policies and delivers programs and services through its 10,000 volunteers and 135 branches across Canada everyday.

Learn more by visiting [www.MentalHealthWeek.ca](http://www.MentalHealthWeek.ca)

This factsheet was partly adapted from a factsheet developed in 2010 by CMHA BC Division on behalf of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information and HeretoHelp.bc.ca. Funding for BC Partners is provided by the Provincial Health Services Authority.

## Myths and Facts

**Myth:** Young people and children don't suffer from mental illness.

**Fact:** It is estimated that more than 18% of young people (ages 15 – 24) in Canada may suffer from a mental health disorder that severely disrupts their ability to function at home, in school, or in their community. Suicide accounts for 24% of all deaths among 15 - 24 year olds and 16% among 25 - 44 year olds. Ninety percent of people who commit suicide have a diagnosable mental illness. The mortality rate due to suicide among men is four times the rate among women.

**Myth:** Mentally ill persons are dangerous.

**Fact:** The vast majority of people with mental illnesses are not violent. In fact, they are more often victims of violence rather than perpetrators of violence. In the cases where violence does occur, the incidence typically results from the same reasons as with the general public such as feeling threatened or excessive use of alcohol and/or drugs.

**Myth:** People with mental illness can work low-level jobs but aren't suited for really important or responsible positions.

**Fact:** People with mental illness, like everyone else, have the potential to work at any level depending on their own abilities, experience and motivation.

**Myth:** A person who has had a mental illness can never be "normal."

**Fact:** People with mental illnesses can and do recover and resume normal activities. The vast majority recover.

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