



**National Alliance on Mental Illness**

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## **What is Mental Illness: Mental Illness Facts**

Mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life.

Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder. The good news about mental illness is that recovery is possible.

Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income. Mental illnesses are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing. Mental illnesses are treatable. Most people diagnosed with a serious mental illness can experience relief from their symptoms by actively participating in an individual treatment plan.

In addition to medication treatment, psychosocial treatment such as cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, peer support groups and other community services can also be components of a treatment plan and that assist with recovery. The availability of transportation, diet, exercise, sleep, friends and meaningful paid or volunteer activities contribute to overall health and wellness, including mental illness recovery.

### **Here are some important facts about mental illness and recovery:**

- Mental illnesses are serious medical illnesses. They cannot be overcome through "will power" and are not related to a person's "character" or intelligence. Mental illness falls along a continuum of severity. Even though mental illness is widespread in the population, the main burden of illness is concentrated in a much smaller proportion—about 6 percent, or 1 in 17 Americans—who live with a serious mental illness. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that one in four adults—approximately 57.7 million Americans—experience a mental health disorder in a given year.
- The U.S. Surgeon General reports that 10 percent of children and adolescents in the United States suffer from serious emotional and mental disorders that cause significant functional impairment in their day-to-day lives at home, in school and with peers.
- The World Health Organization has reported that four of the 10 leading causes of disability in the US and other developed countries are mental disorders. By 2020, Major Depressive Illness will be the leading cause of disability in the world for women and children.
- Mental illness usually strikes individuals in the prime of their lives, often during adolescence and young adulthood. All ages are susceptible, but the young and the old are especially vulnerable.
- Without treatment the consequences of mental illness for the individual and society are staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, suicide and wasted lives; The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than 100 billion dollars each year in the United States.

- The best treatments for serious mental illnesses today are highly effective; between 70 and 90 percent of individuals have significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life with a combination of pharmacological and psychosocial treatments and supports.
- With appropriate effective medication and a wide range of services tailored to their needs, most people who live with serious mental illnesses can significantly reduce the impact of their illness and find a satisfying measure of achievement and independence. A key concept is to develop expertise in developing strategies to manage the illness process.
- Early identification and treatment is of vital importance; By ensuring access to the treatment and recovery supports that are proven effective, recovery is accelerated and the further harm related to the course of illness is minimized.
- Stigma erodes confidence that mental disorders are real, treatable health conditions. We have allowed stigma and a now unwarranted sense of hopelessness to erect attitudinal, structural and financial barriers to effective treatment and recovery. It is time to take these barriers down.

To find out more about specific illnesses visit the **By Illness** page.

**Get more Mental Illness: Facts and Numbers from NAMI's Fact Sheet.**

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Pd. \_\_\_\_\_

**NAMI Article-What is mental illness: Mental Illness Facts.**

[http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=About\\_Mental\\_Illness](http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=About_Mental_Illness)

**Standard 1: Objective 3b- Students will be able to explain the effects of mental disorders on individuals and society.**

1. Define Mental Illness as stated in the article
  
2. List the serious major mental illnesses identified in the article.
  
3. T or F: Mental illness is a result of personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing.
4. List the types of treatment for mental illnesses
  
5. How many adult Americans experience a mental health disorder in a given year?
  
6. When does mental illness usually strike individuals?
  
7. Without treatment, what are the effects of mental illness for the individual and society?
  
8. The best treatment for mental illness is a combination of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ treatments and support.
  
9. Why do you think early identification and treatment of mental illness is important?
  
10. Finish the visual representation on the back of this paper by identifying the effects of untreated mental illness on one's physical, social, and mental/emotional health as well as the impact on society.

Physical

Mental/ Emotional

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Untreated  
Mental Illness

Social

Society

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.