

Common warning signs and symptoms of mental ill-health



Mental ill-health can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic group. It can also have a wide range of causes including trauma, biological factors and external influences, with many people's mental health issues stemming from a combination of different causes.

It is not always easy to know what is, and isn't, normal when it comes to mental health. We all behave differently and someone's actions could be typical for them or the result of a physical illness. Some common symptoms of poor mental health in adults and teenagers are listed below.¹

Symptoms of mental ill-health in adults and teenagers

- Avoiding social events and activities previously enjoyed
- No appetite and weight loss, or eating too much and weight gain
- Tiredness and difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much
- Difficulties speaking, thinking clearly or making decisions
- Using more alcohol, tobacco or drugs than usual
- Self-harming or suicidal behaviour
- Physical aches and pains with no obvious physical cause
- Being restless and agitated or moving very slowly
- Feeling sad, withdrawn or overwhelmed
- Lacking self-confidence and self-esteem
- Headaches and dizziness
- Chest pain or a faster heartbeat
- Feeling tense or nervous
- Changes in appearance and hygiene
- Becoming irritable or starting arguments with friends and colleagues
- Extreme mood changes
- Losing interest in sex
- Hallucinations, which could be visual, auditory or tactile

Poor mental health can also begin to develop in young children. Because they are still learning how to identify and talk about their thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioural.

Symptoms that may occur in children are listed below but do bear in mind that these could be signs of other conditions too.

Symptoms that may indicate mental ill-health in children²

- Becoming socially withdrawn and avoiding spending time with friends and family
- Feeling tearful, upset or angry
- Panic attacks
- Trouble sleeping and changes in eating habits
- Persistent low mood or lack of motivation
- Not enjoying things they used to like doing
- Experiencing low self-esteem or feeling worthless



Spotted a symptom? What can you do?

Speak to your GP or contact your Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) if you are concerned about symptoms of poor mental health in yourself or others.

Sources:

1. [Symptoms - Mind Feelings and symptoms - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

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