

Your mental health –  
and your family  
and friend’s mental  
health – is important



## Wellness Can't Wait

- Buy theater tickets
- Register for school
- Check in on family and friends

Some things should be checked first.

**Mental health illnesses are health problems that change a person’s thinking, feeling, mood or actions.** Anyone can have mental health problems. And if they do, friends and family can make a big difference in their recovery.



# MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ARE COMMON, AFFECTING 1 IN 5 ADULTS. THEY CAN BE LONG LASTING. SOME COMMON ONES ARE DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, BIPOLAR DISEASE AND SCHIZOPHRENIA.

## What You Can Do

Research shows that support from family and friends is vital in helping someone with a mental illness. It's important that you:

- **Learn the signs and symptoms** of their mental illness.
- **Learn about** how their treatments and medications work.
- **Notice when** they are having a hard time and encourage them to talk to their doctor.

## Here's how you can help:

- **Show** that you care.
- **Remind them** that mental health problems can be treated.
- **Offer to help** with everyday tasks.
- **Involve them** in your plans.
- **Show** empathy and compassion.
- **Be an advocate** to help the whole family.
- **Educate other people** about mental health problems.

Studies show that when family and friends are taught about a family member's illness, rates of relapse were reduced by half the first year.

## Following the Plan

Just like with a physical illness, someone with a mental health problem may need to take medicine to get better. Medication compliance is an important part of treating mental health disorders.

Medication compliance is an agreement to take the prescribed dose, at the right time for the recommended length of time. It can be a shared decision between the person, their mental health provider and often a family member involved in their care.



Keeping to a medication plan can be hard to do for people with mental health problems. It is not unusual for them to not take their medicine as directed or at all. Yet failing to stick to the plan can hurt their quality of life or cause complications or a relapse. It can even lead to a hospital stay.

If you notice your family member or friend is having a hard time taking their medications, encourage them to talk to their doctor or pharmacist. They may have tips for keeping up with medication plans. Setting reminders on phones or using pillboxes to help organize medications may help.

Find ways to offer help. Support from family and friends is vital in helping someone with a mental illness.

Sources: **Learn About Mental Health**, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021; **For Friends and Family Members**, MentalHealth.gov, 2020; **Technical Interventions for Medication Adherence in Adult Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders: A Systematic Review**, JMIR Publications, 2019; **Clinical Challenges: Adherence to Psychiatric Drugs**, MedpageToday.com, 2019; **Schizophrenia: What Is It?**, Harvard Medical School, 2019