

Patient Advocacy

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

Myth: Mental illness only affects a few people.

Fact: Mental illness is common. One in five Indians will experience a mental illness. It affects people of all ages, educational and income levels and cultures.

Myth: Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.

Fact: A mental illness is not a character flaw. It is caused by genetic, biological, social and environmental factors. Seeking and accepting help is a sign of strength.

Myth: People with a mental illness never get better.

Fact: With the right kind of help, most people do recover and lead healthy, productive and satisfying lives.

Myth: People with a mental illness can “pull themselves out of it”.

Fact: A mental illness is not caused by personal weakness and is not “cured” by personal strength.

Myth: People with a mental illness are violent.

Fact: People with a mental illness are no more violent or dangerous than the rest of the population. People with a mental illness are more likely to harm themselves – or to be harmed – than they are to hurt other people.

Myth: People with a mental illness should be kept in hospital.

Fact: With appropriate treatment and support, people with mental illness can live successfully in the community. In fact, the majority of people with a mental illness live independently in the community.

SYMPTOMS OF COMMON MENTAL ILLNESS

What are the symptoms of depression?

- Ongoing sad, anxious or empty feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Feeling irritable or restless
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies those were once enjoyable, including sex
- Feeling tired all the time
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, or difficulty making decisions
- Not able to go to sleep or stay asleep (insomnia); may wake in the middle of the night, or sleep all the time
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Thoughts of suicide or making suicide attempts
- Ongoing aches and pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not go away.

Not everyone diagnosed with depression will have all of these symptoms. The signs and symptoms may be different in men, women, younger children and older adults

What are symptoms of schizophrenia ?

1. **Positive symptoms** refer to a distortion of a person's normal thinking and functioning. People with these symptoms are sometimes unable to tell what's real from what is imagined. Positive symptoms include:

- i) **Hallucinations:** when a person sees, hears, smells, or feels things that no one else can.
- ii) **Delusions:** when a person believes things that are not true. For example, a person may believe that people on the radio and television are talking directly to him or her. Sometimes people believe that they are in danger—that other people are trying to hurt them.
- iii) **Thought disorders:** ways of thinking that are not usual or helpful. People with thought disorders may have trouble organizing their thoughts. Sometimes a person will stop talking in the middle of a thought. And some people make up words that have no meaning.

2. **Negative symptoms** refer to difficulty showing emotions or functioning normally. People with negative symptoms may:
Talk in a dull voice
Show no facial expression, like a smile or frown
Have trouble having fun
Have trouble planning and sticking with an activity, like grocery shopping
Talk very little to other people, even when they need to.

What is Panic Disorder.

It is characterized by sudden attacks of terror, usually accompanied by a pounding heart, sweatiness, weakness, faintness, or dizziness. During these attacks, people with panic disorder may flush or feel chilled; their hands may tingle or feel numb; and they may experience nausea, chest pain, or smothering sensations. Panic attacks usually produce a sense of unreality, a fear of impending doom, or a fear of losing control.

What is Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)

Patients have persistent, upsetting thoughts (obsessions) and use rituals (compulsions) to control the anxiety these thoughts produce. Most of the time, the rituals end up controlling them. For example, if people are obsessed with germs or dirt, they may develop compulsion to wash their hands over and over again. If they develop an obsession with intruders, they may lock and relock their doors many times before going to bed. Performing such rituals is not pleasurable. At best, it produces temporary relief from the anxiety created by obsessive thoughts. Other common rituals are a need to repeatedly check things, touch things (especially in a particular sequence), or count things. Some common obsessions include having frequent thoughts of violence and harming loved ones, persistently thinking about performing sexual acts the person dislikes, or having thoughts that are prohibited by religious beliefs. People with OCD may also be preoccupied with order and symmetry, have difficulty throwing things out (so they accumulate), or hoard unneeded items. Healthy people also have rituals, such as checking to see if the stove is off several times before leaving the house. The difference is that people with OCD perform their rituals even though doing so interferes with daily life and they find the repetition distressing. Although most adults with OCD recognize that what they are doing is senseless, some adults and most children may not realize that their behavior is out of the ordinary.

What is Social phobia

It is also called social anxiety disorder, is diagnosed when people become overwhelmingly anxious and excessively self-conscious in everyday social situations. People with social phobia have an intense, persistent, and chronic fear of being watched and judged by others and of doing things that will embarrass them. They can worry for days or weeks before a dreaded situation. This fear may become so severe that it interferes with work, school, and other ordinary activities, and can make it hard to make and keep friends. While many people with social phobia realize that their fears about being with people are excessive or unreasonable, they are unable to overcome them. Even if they manage to confront their fears and be around others, they are usually very anxious beforehand, are

intensely uncomfortable throughout the encounter, and worry about how they were judged for hours afterward.

What is Specific Phobia

It is an intense, irrational fear of something that actually poses little or no threat. Some of the more common specific phobias are heights, escalators, tunnels, highway driving, closed-in places, water, flying, dogs, spiders and injuries involving blood. People with specific phobias may be able to ski the world's tallest mountains with ease but be unable to go above the fifth floor of an office building. While adults with phobias realize that these fears are irrational, they often find that facing, or even thinking about facing, the feared object or situation brings on a panic attack or severe anxiety.

What is Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)

These patients go through the day filled with exaggerated worry and tension, even though there is little or nothing to provoke it. They anticipate disaster and are overly concerned about health issues, money, family problems, or difficulties at work. Sometimes just the thought of getting through the day produces anxiety.

What is Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a common childhood disorder, and it may affect children differently. It makes it hard for a child to focus and pay attention. Some kids may be hyperactive or have trouble being patient. ADHD can make it hard for a child to do well in school or behave at home. Some symptoms at first may look like normal behaviors for a child, but ADHD makes them much worse and occur more often. Children with ADHD have at least six symptoms that start in early years of their lives.

Children with ADHD may:

- Get distracted easily and forget things often.
- Switch too quickly from one activity to the next.
- Have trouble with directions.
- Daydream too much.
- Have trouble finishing tasks like homework or chores.
- Lose toys, books, and school supplies often.
- Fidget and squirm a lot.
- Talk nonstop and interrupt people.
- Run around a lot.

- Touch and play with everything they see.
- Be very impatient.
- Blurt out inappropriate comments.
- Have trouble controlling their emotions.

WHY DO PEOPLE GET MENTAL ILLNESSES?

There is no single cause of mental illness. Mental illness can happen because of a combination of things including:

- **Genes** – some types of mental illnesses tend to run in families. Genes are the “blueprints” for who we are, and we inherit them from our parents. Scientists are looking for the specific genes that may be involved.
- **Brain chemistry and structure** – when chemicals in the brain are not at the right levels, depression can occur. These chemicals, called neurotransmitters, help cells in the brain communicate with each other.
- **Environmental and psychological factors** – trauma, loss of a loved one, a difficult relationship, and other stressors can trigger mental illnesses. Scientists are working to figure out why mental illnesses occurs in some people but not in others with the same or similar experiences. They are also studying why some people recover quickly from mental illness and others do not.

FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN PSYCHIATRY DEPARTMENT, LHMC

Out Patient Department providing care for general psychiatric disorders and specialized services for geriatric mental health problems, psychosexual problems, memory clinics, deaddiction services and child adolescent mental health problems.

- **In Patient Department**
- **Opioid Substitution Therapy Centre** providing daily Out Patient services
- **Community outreach services**

Electroconvulsive therapy services