

Mental health awareness

Employers are realising that awareness around mental wellness can help save lives and break the stigma around mental illness.

As many as one in six South Africans suffer from anxiety and depression. With economic challenges mounting, mental health is becoming more important by the day. Through an increased understanding of the spectrum of mental health challenges faced by employees, employers are equipped to show empathy and manage the challenges associated with it.

There are many types of mental illnesses, such as:

- Anxiety disorders
- Depression and bipolar mood disorder
- Eating disorders
- Personality disorders
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia

Possible symptoms and causes to look out for:

Symptoms Because there are a variety of mental illnesses, symptoms may differ depending on the condition and circumstances. Here are a few examples of symptoms:

- Dramatic sleep and appetite changes
- Decline in personal care
- Rapid or dramatic shifts in emotions
- Withdrawal from social activities that the person previously enjoyed
- A change in performance at school, work or social activities that is out of the ordinary
- Problems with concentration, memory or logical thought and speech that are hard to explain
- Heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells, or touch

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/warning-signs-of-mental-illness>

Causes Although there are several factors that can contribute to mental illness, there is no single cause for it. Causes might include:

- Your genes and family history
- Your life experiences, such as stress or a history of abuse, especially if they happen in childhood
- Biological factors such as chemical imbalances in the brain
- A traumatic brain injury
- A mother's exposure to viruses or toxic chemicals while pregnant
- Use of alcohol or recreational drugs
- Having a serious medical condition like cancer
- Having few friends, and feeling lonely or isolated

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/symptoms-causes/syc-20374968>

When to see a doctor or support a loved one

It is best to seek professional help if you notice any symptoms of mental illness or have suicidal thoughts. You can, for example, see your GP and if needed, he/she can then refer you to a specialist for further treatment. Usually, mental illness may get worse if it is left untreated, so early detection and treatment is of the essence.

If you notice symptoms of a mental illness in a loved one, it's best to have an open discussion with him/her about your concern. Although you might not be able to force them to seek professional care, you can still offer them support and encouragement. You can also help them to find a qualified mental health professional and make an appointment. You can even offer to go along with them to the appointment.

Take your loved one to a hospital or call for help if they have harmed themselves or are considering doing so.

Prevention tips

Although there's no way to prevent mental illness, it's possible to take steps to control your symptoms if you have been diagnosed with a mental illness. These include controlling stress, increasing resilience, and boosting low self-esteem.

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Keep an eye out for warning signs, learn what your triggers are and make sure you know what to do if symptoms present themselves. It's always best to ask your doctor and therapist for guidance and advice in this aspect. Make sure that you get help when symptoms appear since it could be harder to treat if you wait until the symptoms are advanced.

Remember to take good care of yourself: get enough sleep, eat healthily, and get exercise. If you have any problems with any of these or have questions, see a professional to get the help you need to take control of your health.

Support and resources

Cipla's mental health partner, the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), have an excess of resources across various channels available to help people cope with mental health pressures.

Here are some helpful tips from SADAG to reduce stress:

- Maintain a daily routine
- Acknowledge your feelings and focus on things you can control
- Find things to keep you busy (whether it is constructive or creative) and to help lift your mood
- Stay connected with your loved ones
- If you are on medication, remember to take it as prescribed

Whether you are helping a friend, or need help yourself, you can call **the Cipla SADAG's 24-hour mental health helpline on 0800 456 789 or send a message via WhatsApp on 076 882 2775 between 9am – 5pm**

For more information on **depression and anxiety**, you can access the SADAG website at <https://www.sadag.org/>