

## What You Need to Know About Mental Illness

Mental illness is not something you can catch, like a cold.

The National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) defines Mental Illness as “a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others.”

Even if someone is exhibiting symptoms seen in mental illness, it does not mean they have a mental illness. They may be having a “mental crisis,” which is not the same as having a mental illness. Recently, our nation has seen a significant increase in the number of mass (or active) shooter incidents. Many reports state that the shooter “had a mental illness.” According to the National Center for Health Statistics, reports show that “fewer than [5% of the 120,000 gun-related killings](#) that occurred in the U.S. between 2001-2010 were perpetrated by individuals with a mental illness...”

“Studies show that the mentally ill do present a higher risk for violence than others, but overall, they account for just 3-5% of violence in the country — and only 1% of gun violence against strangers,” according to a 2016 article in the Washington Post.

There are over 200 types of mental illness. The most common mental illnesses seen in the United States and the percentages are Schizophrenia (1%), anxiety disorders (19%), Depression (8%), Co-occurring Substance Use Disorder and Mental Illness (8%), post-traumatic stress disorder (4%), bipolar disorder (3%), borderline personality disorder (1%) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (1%). One in five US adults live with mental illness, and one in 20 adults live with a serious mental illness every year. One in six US youth age 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year.

Although there is no single cause for mental illness, there are factors that can contribute to risk for

mental illness. Those factors include Adverse Childhood Experiences (e.g., trauma, abuse), ongoing chronic medical conditions (e.g., cancer), biological or chemical imbalances in the brain, use of alcohol or drugs, and feelings of loneliness or isolation.

*Listed below are some of the symptoms seen in specific mental illnesses:*

- **Bipolar Disorder** symptoms include either episodes of mania (excessive enthusiasm or desire) or depression that may include psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations or delusions.
- With **Schizophrenia Disorder**, a person must have two or more symptoms occurring persistently. Some of those symptoms include delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech, and catatonic (unresponsive) behavior.
- **Anxiety Disorder** symptoms include feelings of dread, restlessness, irritability, anticipating the worst, and being watchful for signs of danger. Physical symptoms include a pounding or racing heart, shortness of breath, and sweating.
- For **Depression**, some of the symptoms seen are changes in sleep and appetite, lack of concentration, loss of energy, lack of interest in activities, and hopeless or guilty thoughts.

Treatment for mental illness includes medication, therapy, and other behavioral health services. For further information, contact our GHS Customer Service (810-257-3705). To inquire about our free classes, please go to <https://genhs.org/free-training/> for more information.