

# Mental Illness – Early Recognition

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The occurrence of mental illness is a growing concern in Canada. It does not develop as a result of a personal failure or weakness and, age, race and religion are not determining factors. Mental illness can happen to anyone – it knows no boundaries. The earlier that appropriate assistance can be sought and provided the better the outcome.

## How to identify mental illness:

Mental illness includes a broad range of psychological or behavioral symptoms that reduce an individual's capacity to cope with daily life, or impact an individual's ability to cope with the demands and stress of day to day living.

Mental illness is a term used to describe a number of disorders including depression, anxiety, addiction, personality disorders, bi-polar, damage to the brain from disease, or a disease process such as Alzheimer Disease.

There is no single cause of mental illness. Most symptoms occur gradually and may become more profound over time. Generally speaking, mental illness becomes visible when the person is in need to professional assistance.

Some early indications of mental illness may include:

- Loss of appetite or over indulgence
- chronic lateness and fatigue
- feeling of sadness, anxiousness, fearfulness or paranoia
- difficulty concentrating
- loss of interest in hobbies or activities that previously brought enjoyment
- use of substances such as drugs and/or alcohol to cope
- feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- thoughts of death or suicide

## Getting Help:

If you suspect that you are suffering from a mental illness visit your physician or other medical professional. Faculty and staff looking for assistance in dealing with mental illness can contact Human Resource Services at 780.492.7124, or the Employee and Family Assistance program for psychological counseling 780.428.7587. [www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap](http://www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap)

Counseling & Clinical Services is available to students who may be experiencing personal, academic or career concerns. [www.uwell.ualberta.ca](http://www.uwell.ualberta.ca).

If you suspect a friend, family member or co-worker is struggling with a mental illness, being supportive, providing reassurance, companionship and being a resource can be of great benefit. To learn more about mental illness, please visit [www.virtualwellness.ualberta.ca](http://www.virtualwellness.ualberta.ca)