

Feel Well

# Mental health.

Caring for your mental health is as important as looking after your physical health. Find out more about common types of mental health problems, what can cause them and tactics for staying on top mentally.



# What is mental health?

Mental health is a major part of the national conversation around wellbeing. The UN defines mental health as ‘a positive concept related to the social and emotional wellbeing of people and communities.’ Our mental health covers how happy we feel about our lives, how able we feel to cope with life’s ups and downs and how connected we feel to others.

# Why is good mental health important?

Taking care of your mental health is as important as looking after your physical health. That’s because our mental health affects everything we do and how we feel about and behave in our lives. Like physical health, our mental health is prone to fluctuations and changes, it doesn’t stay the same. Everyone has a bad day from time to time and accepting that things don’t always go the way we want or expect them to helps us to manage expectations. If we experience low moods for a longer period of time, it’s vital to recognise that you’re not okay and to seek help with those feelings.

# Types of mental health problems

One in four people in the UK are affected by mental health problems. Some of the most common conditions are:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Addiction
- Bipolar disorder
- OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder)
- Eating disorders

Each condition brings with it its own effects and challenges and requires an individual approach to treatment.

# Causes of mental health problems

The contributory factors to poor mental health are varied and complex. Mental Health UK suggests there are five main factors which can cause mental health problems:

- Family – mental health disorders can be passed on genetically in families
- Hormones – an imbalance in hormones can be behind changes in your mental health

- Environment – certain events which have happened in your life or childhood have a bearing on your mental health
- Lifestyle – the choices we make around food, exercise, alcohol, smoking and drugs can have a negative impact on how we feel mentally and emotionally

# Positive steps to protect your mental health

Managing your mental health is within your power and there are lots of steps you can take to help protect your mental health.

## Talk about your feelings

Sharing your feelings with someone else usually makes you feel better. Choose someone you’re close to and who you trust. Don’t worry about the words you choose: the important thing is to try and start the conversation.

## Eat well

Making an effort to eat a balanced diet has many positive effects on your physical and mental health. Your brain needs the right nutrients to perform at its best. Take care with caffeine and sugar as these can cause mood highs and lows.

## Drink in moderation

It’s easy to reach for alcohol when you’re not feeling okay. Beer or wine might lift your spirits in the short term, but any improvement in mood is just temporary. Alcohol makes you feel worse the day after you indulge and can enhance anxiety. It’s easy to become dependent on drinking, so try to stick to your recommended weekly units.

## Get help

If you notice that your mental health is getting worse, reach out for help from a loved one, your GP or a local organisation that can help you. Don’t suffer in silence: getting help could save your life.



**One in four in adults in the UK experience mental health problems, according to MIND.**