

October 2007

The Wellness Exchange

A Publication of



BUSINESS HEALTH SERVICESSM

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Mental Illness Awareness



Mental Illness Awareness Week, occurring this year from October 7th - 13th, is an annual national observance to educate the American public about mental illnesses and their treatments.

What is Mental Illness?

Mental illness is any diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder that interferes with or limits a person's ability to live, work, learn, and participate fully in the community. Examples of mental illness include disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, posttraumatic stress disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, and Alzheimer's disease. Mental illness involves the body, mood, and thoughts. It affects the way a person thinks, eats, sleeps, and feels about him/herself. Most importantly, mental illness is not a sign of personal weakness or lack of willpower. People with a mental illness cannot simply overcome it and get better on their own; treatment is required.

Who is Affected?

One in five Americans experiences mental illness in a year. Mental illness affects all people from every cultural, racial, and ethnic background and can occur at any stage of life. No community, school, or workplace is untouched by mental illness.

What Can Be Done?

A lot! Mental illness is treatable. For persons of any age, early detection and treatment can help prevent mental illness from worsening and can improve the individual's chances for full recovery. Therefore, it is critical for a person to seek mental health care when he or she needs it.

What Can I Do?

You can do a lot, starting with the way you act and how you speak.

- Avoid labeling people with words like "crazy," "wacko," "loony," or by their diagnosis. Instead of saying someone is a "schizophrenic" say "a person with schizophrenia."
- Learn the facts about mental health and share them with others, especially if you hear something that is untrue.
- Treat people with mental illnesses with respect and dignity, as you would anybody else.
- Respect the rights of people with mental illnesses and don't discriminate against them when it comes to housing, employment, or education.

For more information, please visit <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>.

October 4, 2007 is National Depression Screening Day

National Depression Screening Day is observed each October along with Mental Illness Awareness Week. The goals of this observance are to educate the public and clinicians about the symptoms and effective treatment of mood and anxiety disorders, to offer individuals opportunities to be screened for these disorders, and to connect individuals in need of treatment with appropriate mental health care services.

Depression is a serious medical illness. It's more than just feeling "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. It's feeling "down" and "low" and "hopeless" for weeks at a time.

Symptoms Include:

- Persistent sad, anxious mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed.
- Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, helplessness

Need to speak with a professional? Call us today for free, confidential counseling services, additional resources or consultation. Clinicians are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more information and to register for a screening, visit <http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org>





October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

For more information, contact us at 800-765-3277

Although October is National Breast Cancer Awareness month, being aware of breast cancer issues is important year-round.

What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast begin to grow out of control and invade nearby tissues or spread throughout the body. Large collections of this out-of-control tissue are called tumors. However, benign tumors are not cancerous because they cannot spread and are not life-threatening. The tumors that can spread throughout the body and/or invade nearby tissue are called malignant tumors, and are considered cancer.

While the majority of cases occur in women, men can also get breast cancer. Male breast cancer is not very common; for every 100 cases of breast cancer, less than 1 are in men. Signs of breast cancer and treatment for men are almost the same as for women.

Risk Factors:

- Research has found several risk factors that may increase your chances of getting breast cancer, including:
- ~ Personal history of breast cancer or some non-cancerous breast diseases.
 - ~ Family history of breast cancer (mother, sister, daughter).
 - ~ Being overweight.
 - ~ Long-term use of hormone replacement therapy.
 - ~ Using birth control pills.
 - ~ Drinking alcohol (more than one drink a day).
 - ~ Not getting regular exercise.
 - ~ Getting older.
 - ~ Starting your menstrual period at a very young age.
 - ~ Starting menopause at a late age.

Having a risk factor does not mean you will get breast cancer. Most women have some risk factors and most women do not get breast cancer. If you have breast cancer risk factors, talk with your doctor about ways you can lower your risk and about screening for breast cancer.

Reducing Risk

- There are ways you can help lower your risk of breast cancer:
- ~ Control your weight and get regular exercise.
 - ~ Know your family history of breast cancer.
 - ~ Find out the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy.
 - ~ Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.
 - ~ Get screened for breast cancer regularly.

Symptoms

- Different people have different warning signs for breast cancer, and some people do not have any symptoms at all. Symptoms may include:
- ~ New lump in the breast or underarm.
 - ~ Thickening or swelling of part of the breast.
 - ~ Irritation or dimpling of breast skin.
 - ~ Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area or the breast.
 - ~ Pulling in of the nipple or pain in the nipple area.
 - ~ Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood.
 - ~ Any change in the size or the shape of the breast.
 - ~ Pain in any area of the breast.

Keep in mind that some of these warning signs can happen with other conditions that are not cancer. If you have any signs that worry you, be sure to see your doctor right away.

Screening



Breast cancer screening means checking a woman's breasts for cancer before there are signs or symptoms of the disease. Three main tests are used to screen the breasts for cancer.

- ~ **Mammogram.** This is an X-ray of the breast. Mammograms are the best method to detect breast cancer early when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to feel or cause symptoms. Having regular mammograms can lower breast cancer's fatality rate. Regular mammograms are recommended for women age 40 years and older.
- ~ **Clinical breast exam.** This is an examination by a doctor or nurse, who uses his or her hands to feel for lumps and other changes.
- ~ **Breast self-exam.** This is when you check your own breasts for lumps, changes in size or shape of the breast, or any other changes in the breasts or underarm.

For more information, visit:
www.cancer.org
www.komen.org
www.nbcam.org

Fast Facts

~ The chance of a woman having invasive breast cancer some time during her life is about 1 in 8.

In the United States, breast cancer is:

- ~ The most common cancer in women, no matter your race or ethnicity.
- ~ The most common cause of death from cancer among Hispanic women.
- ~ The second most common cause of death from cancer (after lung cancer) among white, black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native women.

In 2003 (the most recent year numbers are available):

- ~ 181,646 women and 1,826 men developed breast cancer.
- ~ 41,619 women and 379 men died from breast cancer.