

TREATMENTS FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

QUICK FACTS

- Mental illness can be treated.
- When you or someone you know starts to feel mentally unwell, the first step in obtaining treatment is to see a doctor or other health professional for diagnosis.
- Treatment can involve psychological therapy, medication, community supports, and self-help strategies.

IS MENTAL ILLNESS TREATABLE?

Yes, mental illness can be treated. This means that many people who have a mental illness, and are treated, recover well or even completely. However, because there are many different factors contributing to the development of each illness, it can sometimes be difficult to predict how, when, or to what degree someone is going to get better.

WHAT DOES BEING DIAGNOSED MEAN?

When you or someone you know starts to feel mentally unwell, the first step in obtaining treatment is to see a doctor or other health professional for diagnosis. After a thorough assessment, a doctor can make a diagnosis based on a particular pattern of symptoms. A decision can then be made about the best treatment for these symptoms and their underlying causes.

WHAT DOES TREATMENT REALLY MEAN?

Treatment means all the different ways in which someone with a mental illness can get help to minimise the effects of the illness and promote recovery.

It can involve psychological therapy, medication, and various supports in the community, as well as people with the mental illness helping themselves.

- **Psychological therapy**

A doctor, psychologist or other health professional talks with the person about their symptoms and concerns, and discusses new ways of thinking about and managing them.

- **Medication**

Some people are helped by taking medication for a while; others may need it on an

ongoing basis. The doctor should explain the benefits and possible side-effects of medication before it is prescribed. Medical research shows that many mental illnesses are associated with changes in our brain chemistry. Medications help the brain to restore its usual chemical balance, so that the symptoms are reduced or even eliminated.

- **Community support programs**

Support programs are especially important for people with recurrent symptoms or who have a psychiatric disability. This support may include information, accommodation, help with finding suitable work, training and education, psychosocial rehabilitation and mutual support groups. Understanding and acceptance by the community is also very important.

Further information about these different approaches is available in the Guide (see tab above).

WHERE ARE PEOPLE TREATED?

These days, clinical treatment generally takes place in the community rather than in a hospital. Anyone who has been diagnosed with a mental illness which needs treatment, should be able to receive a range of clinical services in their own community. If necessary, ongoing support can be provided by a community mental health service clinic, where there are a range of mental health professionals.

HOW CAN PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES?

There are lots of things that people with a mental illness can do for themselves, to help recover a balanced life. Healthy eating, getting plenty of sleep, and regular physical activity are all important to good mental health. Learning skills which help deal with stress, feeling down, relationships or the symptoms of the illness, are also ways in which someone with a mental illness can look after themselves.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

If you have any concerns about your treatment speak to your doctor.