



Women and Mental Health

Overview

Mental disorders can affect women and men differently. Some disorders are more common in women such as [depression](#) and [anxiety](#). There are also certain types of depression that are unique to women. Some women may experience symptoms of mental disorders at times of hormone change, such as [perinatal depression](#), premenstrual dysphoric disorder, and perimenopause-related depression. When it comes to other mental disorders such as [schizophrenia](#) and [bipolar disorder](#), research has not found differences in rates that men and women experiences these illnesses. But, women may experience these illnesses differently – certain symptoms may be more common in women than in men, and the course of the illness can be affected by the sex of the individual. Researchers are only now beginning to tease apart the various biological and psychosocial factors that may impact the mental health of both women and men.

Warning Signs

Women and men can develop most of the same mental disorders and conditions, but may experience different symptoms. Some symptoms include:

- Persistent sadness or feelings of hopelessness
- Abuse of alcohol and/or drugs
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Excessive fear or worry
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Extremely high and low moods
- Aches, headaches, or digestive problems without a clear cause
- Irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Thoughts of suicide

Mental disorders can be treated: If you are unsure where to go for help, ask your family doctor or [visit NIMH's Help for Mental Illness](#) webpage. Asking questions and providing information to your doctor and other providers can improve your care. Talking with your doctor builds trust and leads to better results, quality, safety, and satisfaction. Visit the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality website for tips at www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/.

If you or someone you know is in a crisis, get help immediately. You can call 911 or the [National Suicide Prevention Line](#) at **1.800.273.TALK (8255)**.

Health Topics and Resources

Featured Health Topics

- [Anxiety Disorders](#)
- [Depression](#)
- [Eating Disorders](#)
- [Bipolar Disorder \(Manic-Depressive Illness\)](#)
- [Schizophrenia](#)
- [Borderline Personality Disorder](#)
- [Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD, ADD\)](#)
- [Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder \(OCD\)](#)
- [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)](#)

Federal Resources

- [National Institute of Child Health & Human Development \(NICHD\)](#): Learn more about NICHD's *Moms' Mental Health Matters* initiative.
- [Office on Women's Health \(OWH\)](#): Learn more about women's mental health on the OWH's website, which is a part of the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#).
- [Women's Health: Medline Plus](#): Learn more about the unique health issues women have.
- [Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\)](#): Learn more about depression during and after pregnancy on HRSA's website.

Featured Videos



Postpartum Depression

This video provides patient testimony and information on the signs and symptoms of postpartum depression and reinforces the importance of seeking help and treatment from a health professional.



[Signs, Symptoms, and Treatment of Depression](#)

This video describes the causes, symptoms, and treatments of depression.



Cynthia Bulik, Ph.D.
University of North Carolina



[Eating Disorders Myths Busted](#)

These series of videos feature NIMH grantee Dr. Cynthia Bulik, who describes the different types of eating disorders and debunks myths.

Health Hotlines

- **[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)**: If you or someone you know is in a crisis, get help immediately. You can call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Line at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**. The lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. By calling the hotline number, you'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor at a crisis center in your area 24/7.
- **[Disaster Distress Helpline](#)**: People affected by natural or human-caused disasters can call this helpline, sponsored by the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA), to receive immediate counseling. Calling 1-800-985-5990 will connect you to a trained professional from the closest crisis counseling center within the network.

Clinical Trials

Clinical research is medical research that involves people like you. People volunteer to participate in carefully conducted investigations that ultimately uncover better ways to treat, prevent, diagnose, and understand human disease. Clinical research includes trials that test new treatments and therapies as well as long-term natural history studies, which provide valuable information about how disease and health progress.

Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) conduct a large number of research studies with patients and healthy volunteers. Our researchers are currently working to identify the causes of, treatments for, and predictors of risk for reproductive endocrine-related mood disorders including the following:

- [Postpartum Depression](#)
- [Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder](#) (PMDD, a severe premenstrual syndrome)
- [Perimenopausal Depression](#)

In addition to these disorders, NIMH researchers are also studying other mental disorders that affect women such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. To find studies being conducted at the NIMH, visit [Join a Study: Adults](#).

Our studies take place at the [NIH Clinical Center](#) in Bethesda, Maryland and require regular visits. If you don't live nearby but are interested in finding a clinical trial near you, visit www.clinicaltrials.gov.

Why should women participate in a clinical study?

Sex and gender can influence health in important ways. You can help scientists learn more about the differences and make it possible to draw conclusions that advance health for both women and men. NIMH is committed to ensuring that women trying to decide whether to enroll in a clinical study get all the information they need to feel comfortable and make informed decisions.

Last Revised: July 2016 Retrieved

From: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/women-and-mental-health/index.shtml>