

What is mental health?

Mental Health is defined as a state of well being in which an individual can cope with the normal stresses of life and can work productively. However when a person is suffering from mental ill health, then their emotional well being has been affected.

Mental health conditions

Mental health conditions vary from stress, anxiety and depression, which are very common through to bipolar and psychosis, which are less common.

- **Stress:** the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure.
- **Depression:** ranges from lasting feelings of sadness and hopelessness to losing interest in the things you used to enjoy and feeling very tearful or anxious.
- **Anxiety:** a feeling of unease or dread - such as worry or fear that can be mild or severe.
- **Bipolar:** affects a person's mood, often going from one extreme to the other.
- **Schizophrenia:** a mind that can experience episodes of dysfunction and disorder.
- **Psychosis:** mental health problems that stop the person from thinking clearly, telling the difference between reality and their imagination, and acting in a normal way.

There are also conditions such as personality and eating disorders.

Signs and symptoms

Below are some of the signs and symptoms of certain mental health conditions:

- **Stress:** irritability, sleep problems, anxiety, depression and difficulty in concentrating.
- **Depression:** having low self esteem, feeling tearful and not getting enjoyment from life.
- **Anxiety:** feeling on edge, feelings of dread, irritability, impatience and restlessness.
- **Eating disorders:** binge eating, obsessively controlling weight loss or vomiting after eating.
- **Bipolar:** feeling depressed and low (with self doubt and depression) and switching to feeling high and manic (feeling full of energy but sometimes distracted or irritated).
- **Psychosis and schizophrenia:** hallucinations, delusions, confused thoughts and lack of insight or self-awareness

Key points

Your employer must not discriminate against you because of a disability, like suffering from a mental health condition.

Your employer must make reasonable adjustments in the workplace to ensure that the workplace is equal for all workers.

If you require reasonable adjustments you should talk to your GP who will write a fit for work statement or 'fit note' to help you get back into work.

If you are interviewing for a new position, the person recruiting you should not ask you health questions until the job offer is made (there are some special exceptions to this).

Your employer should help you settle back into your job role if you have had time off due to mental ill health. It can be a good idea to talk to your employer about which adjustments will be made and how the situation will be monitored, with a return to work action plan.





Seeking support and guidance

If you believe that you are suffering from a mental health condition, you should talk to your employer and your doctor to see if there are any adjustments that could be made in your workplace to make it easier for you to get your work done.

Your doctor will find you a course of treatment that is suitable for you, whether it be through medication, behavioural therapy or by helping you understand the things that trigger certain feelings, and learning how best to deal with them.

It is important to get support and talk about your feelings, as keeping everything in can actually make you feel worse.

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Did you know?

One worker in six workers has a mental health condition.

Stress is the most common cause of long-term absence from work. It can affect anyone from the most junior to the most senior in an organisation.

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