



Tips for Talking With a Health Care Provider About Your Mental Health

Don't wait for a health care provider to ask about your mental health. Start the conversation. Here are five tips to help prepare and guide you on talking to a health care provider about your mental health and getting the most out of your visit.

1. Talk to a primary care provider.



If you don't know where to start for help, you may want to consider bringing up your mental health concerns during your appointment with a **primary care provider (PCP)**. A PCP is a health care practitioner people see for common medical problems, and this person is often a doctor. However, a PCP may be a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner.

Mental health is an integral part of health, and people with mental disorders can often be **at risk for other medical conditions**, such as heart disease or diabetes. In many primary care settings, you may be asked if you're feeling anxious or depressed, or if you have had thoughts of suicide. Even if your PCP doesn't ask you first, take this opportunity to talk to your PCP, who can help refer you to a mental health professional. You also can visit the **NIMH Find Help for Mental Illnesses** webpage for help finding a health care provider or treatment.

2. Prepare ahead of your visit.



Health care providers have a limited time for each appointment, so it may be helpful to think of your questions or concerns beforehand.

- **Prepare your questions.** Make a list of what you want to discuss and any questions or concerns you might have. This **worksheet** may help you prepare your questions or concerns.
- **Prepare a list of your medications.** It's important to tell your health care provider about all the medications you're taking, including over-the-counter (nonprescription) drugs, herbal remedies, vitamins, and supplements. This **worksheet** can help you track your medications.
- **Review your family history.** Certain mental illnesses tend to run in families and having a relative with a mental disorder could mean you're at higher risk. Knowing your **family mental health history** can help determine your risk for certain disorders. It can also help your health care provider recommend actions for reducing your risk and enable you and your provider to look for early warning signs.