

Treatment

The treatment depends on the type of mental illness that the individual has, its severity and what works best for them. In many cases, a combination of treatments works best.

If they have a mild mental illness with well-controlled symptoms, treatment from their primary care provider may be sufficient. However, often a team approach is appropriate to make sure all the psychiatric, medical, and social needs are met. This is especially important for severe mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia.

Treatment teams

Treatment team may include their:

- Family or primary care doctor
- Nurse practitioner
- Physician assistant
- Psychiatrist, a medical doctor who diagnoses and treats mental illnesses
- Psychotherapist, such as a psychologist or a licensed counselor
- Pharmacist
- Social worker
- Family members

Medications

Although psychiatric medications don't cure mental illness, they can often significantly improve symptoms. Psychiatric medications can also help make other treatments, such as psychotherapy, more effective. The best medications for them will depend on their situation and how their body responds to the medication.

Some of the most used classes of prescription psychiatric medications include:

- **Antidepressants.** Antidepressants are used to treat depression, anxiety, and sometimes other conditions. They can help improve symptoms such as sadness, hopelessness, lack of energy, difficulty concentrating and lack

of interest in activities. Antidepressants are not addictive and do not cause dependency.

- **Anti-anxiety medications.** These drugs are used to treat anxiety disorders, such as generalized anxiety disorder or panic disorder. They may also help reduce agitation and insomnia. Long-term anti-anxiety drugs typically are antidepressants that also work for anxiety. Fast-acting anti-anxiety drugs help with short-term relief, but they also have the potential to cause dependency, so ideally, they'd be used short term.
- **Mood-stabilizing medications.** Mood stabilizers are most used to treat bipolar disorders, which involves alternating episodes of mania and depression. Sometimes mood stabilizers are used with antidepressants to treat depression.
- **Antipsychotic medications.** Antipsychotic drugs are typically used to treat psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia. Antipsychotic medications may also be used to treat bipolar disorders or used with antidepressants to treat depression.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy, also called talk therapy, involves talking about your condition and related issues with a mental health professional. During psychotherapy, they learn about their condition and moods, feelings, thoughts and behavior. With the insights and knowledge they gain, they can learn coping and stress management skills.

There are many types of psychotherapy, each with its own approach to improving their mental well-being. Psychotherapy often can be successfully completed in a few months, but in some cases, long-term treatment may be needed. It can take place one-on-one, in a group or with family members.

When choosing a therapist, they should feel comfortable and be confident that he or she is capable of listening and hearing what the person has to say. Also, it's important that their therapist understands the life journey that has helped shape who they are and how they live in the world.

Brain-stimulation treatments

Brain-stimulation treatments are sometimes used for depression and other mental health disorders. They're generally reserved for situations in which medications and

psychotherapy haven't worked. They include electroconvulsive therapy, repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation, deep brain stimulation and vagus nerve stimulation.

Make sure to understand all the risks and benefits of any recommended treatment.

Hospital and residential treatment programs

Sometimes mental illness becomes so severe that they need care in a psychiatric hospital. This is generally recommended when they can't care for themselves properly or when they're in immediate danger of harming themselves or someone else.

Options include 24-hour inpatient care, partial or day hospitalization, or residential treatment, which offers a temporary supportive place to live. Another option may be intensive outpatient treatment.

Substance misuse treatment

Problems with substance use commonly occur along with mental illness. Often it interferes with treatment and worsens mental illness. If they can't stop using drugs or alcohol on their own, they need treatment. Talk to the doctor about treatment options.

Participating in your own care

Working together, the individual and their primary care provider or mental health professional can decide which treatment may be best, depending on their symptoms and their severity, their personal preferences, medication side effects, and other factors. In some cases, a mental illness may be so severe that a doctor or loved one may need to guide them care until they're well enough to participate in decision-making.