

## National Health Observances

### May

National Mental Health Month  
Women's Healthcare Month  
Family Wellness Month  
Teen Self-Esteem Month

### Week of May 3 -9

National Anxiety & Depression  
Awareness Week

### June

Effective Communications Month  
Professional Wellness Month  
Home Safety Month

### Week of June 7-13

National Headache Week

### Week of June 7-13

National Business Etiquette Week

### Week of June 15-21

Men's Health Week

### July

Food Safety Month  
Social Wellness Month  
Family Reunion Month  
UV Safety Month

### August

Happiness Happens Month  
National Win with Civility Month  
What Will Your Legacy Be Month

### Week of August 1-7

Simplify Your Life Week

### Week of August 3-9

National Fraud Awareness Week

### Week of August 9-15

Resurrect Romance Week



## Depression... and Your Health

The mind and the body are intimately connected, and our overall health depends on both working well. This is most evident in depression: Research shows that people who suffer from clinical depression face a higher risk of contracting one of the stress-linked illnesses than the rest of the population.

"I think you could safely say that there's a close connection between depression and other illnesses, such as hypertension," says Barbara Smith M.D., a practicing psychiatrist in Greensboro, NC. "In my experience, people who are depressed frequently suffer from psychosomatic complaints like headaches and stomach problems."

Learning how to distinguish between a temporary attack of the blues and the illness of depression is a vitally important step on the road to recovering from this painful condition.

"Everybody has a bad day now and then," says Dr. Smith. "But if you're struggling with the symptoms of clinical depression, you need to

seek medical attention, so you can get the help you need to feel better.

"These days, the outlook for patients with depression is quite hopeful. The medications available are so effective that they really can resolve most depressions, and usually within a matter of a few weeks. And that's good news for all those who suffer from this painful disorder."

### Warning Signs of Depression

- Frequent thoughts of suicide or a suicide attempt.
- Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness and pessimism.
- An unexplained loss of appetite, with accompanying weight loss, or compulsive overeating.
- Marked, continuing restlessness and irritability.
- A gradual loss of interest in activities that used to provide enjoyment, including sex.
- Increasing difficulty in concentrating, remembering and decision-making.

## Answers about Anxiety

Anxiety disorders are a group of disorders that can affect adults, adolescents and children. Anxiety disorders overwhelm people with chronic feelings of anxiety and fear.

Unlike periods of anxiety that everyone feels because they are caused by a stressful event, anxiety disorders are chronic, and if not treated, can disrupt a person's life.

Fortunately, effective treatments do exist. Early diagnosis may aid early recovery, prevent the disorder from getting worse and possibly prevent accompanying depression. Yet, because many people don't understand these disorders, only 25 percent of those suffering from them seek treatment.

Each anxiety disorder is distinct from the others, but all are marked by excessive, irrational fear and dread.

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#### Most Common Anxiety Disorders:

- Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)
- Panic disorder
- Phobias
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

#### Diagnosis:

To diagnose an anxiety disorder, doctors first rule out other medical conditions. Anxiety attacks can mimic or accompany endocrine gland problems, or acute disorders of the heart or lungs, including heart attacks and asthma.

The second step involves a series of tests or questions used to assess a person's mental state and determine if he or she is suffering from an anxiety disorder, and, if so, which one. Anxiety disorders are not treated identically, so it's important to determine the specific problem before beginning any treatment.

#### Treatment:

Anxiety disorders require treatment that can last from a few months to a year or more. Two types of treatment are available for an anxiety disorder: medication and specific types of psychotherapy (sometimes called "talk therapy"), NIMH says. Both approaches can be effective for most disorders. The choice of one or the other, or both, depends on the patient's and the doctor's preference, and also on the particular anxiety disorder.

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