

Learning About Taking Medicine to Support Your Mental Health



Why are medicines used to treat mental health problems?

Medicines are one approach to treating mental health problems. They usually give the best results when they're used along with counseling. Medicines may help relieve symptoms so you can get more benefit from counseling. And when you feel better, you may be able to take better care of yourself.

Most medicines don't work right away. It usually takes awhile to see results. It may take time and patience to find the right dose for you. And the first medicine you try may not be the best choice for you. Your doctor can work with you to find a medicine and dose that works well while causing the fewest side effects.

How can you get past barriers to taking your medicines?

People often have concerns or questions about taking medicines for mental health conditions. Here are some common concerns people have and some things that may be helpful to think about.

It seems weak to need medicine to fix my problem.

You probably don't think it's weak to take medicine to treat a health problem like asthma or heart disease. A mental health condition is a health problem too, and medicine can help.

Medicine isn't a quick fix. But it may ease your symptoms enough that you can do other things that can help you, like getting counseling.

I tried a medicine, and it didn't work. Why try again?

Some people get a good result from the first medicine they try, but many don't. That can be discouraging, but try to be patient. There is no "magic pill" that works for everyone. Everyone's body is different. And for most conditions, there are many medicine choices. If you keep working with your doctor, you're likely to find a medicine and a dose that will help you.

I'm worried that I won't feel like myself anymore.

Sometimes people worry that medicine will make them feel dull or flat. But think about how your condition makes you feel. Mental health problems often rob people of their energy, focus, and joy in life. Your condition may cause problems in your relationships with family or friends. It may be hard to be productive or creative or even to take good care of yourself.

Medicines don't change who you are. But they may relieve your symptoms so you can feel more like the person you want to be.

I'm concerned about the cost of medicine.

There are ways to save money on the medicines you need. For example, maybe you could take a generic instead of the brand-name medicine. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about generics or coupons to reduce your cost. Or you might ask your doctor if you can buy pills at twice the dose you need and then split them. (Some pills can't be split.)

It's a good idea to ask your doctor about prescription assistance programs. If you qualify, you may be able to get the medicines you need for a very low price.

I don't want to have to rely on medicine.

You may not need to take medicine forever. Some people are able to stop taking their medicines. When you feel like you're ready to quit, work with your doctor to stop your medicine safely. Your doctor may need to slowly reduce the dose to help prevent problems, like having your symptoms come back.

Other people need to stay on medicine long-term to keep their symptoms under control. Many people take medicine every day for a wide variety of health issues. There is no shame in needing medicine to feel better. It's part of taking care of your health.

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