

Understanding Mental Health Comorbidity

Mental health comorbidity means having two or more health conditions at the same time. Many people live with both a mental health issue and a physical illness. These problems often affect each other. A physical illness can raise stress or make someone feel depressed or anxious. In the same way, mental health problems can make physical symptoms feel worse. This can create a cycle that is hard to stop.

Mental health conditions and substance use often occur together. Some people use alcohol or drugs to cope with painful feelings. This may seem like it helps for a short time, but it usually makes symptoms worse and slows recovery.

The need for integrated care

Integrated care treats both mental and physical health needs at the same time. When people receive this kind of care, they often feel better and have fewer health problems. Treating only one condition can leave the other untreated, which can lead to more stress and poorer health.

Stress and long-term illness are closely linked. Stress can cause headaches and stomach problems. Long-term illness can make it harder to stay mentally strong. Mental health problems can also be hard to see, which may cause people to stay silent or avoid help.

To support good health, we need to see mental health as part of overall health. Integrated care and open conversation can help people get the support they need. Treating the whole person gives them a better chance to heal and live well.

#MentalHealthMatters

If you or someone you know is struggling with a mental health issue, help is out there. Contact the Mental Health America 24/7 Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741-741).

Reviewed by Medical Director, Doctor of Medicine, MD.



About 35% of adults in the U.S. who have a mental health disorder also have a substance use disorder.

— Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

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