

# Introduction to Mental Health and Mental Illness



## Mental Health

A state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own potential to cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and can contribute to their community.

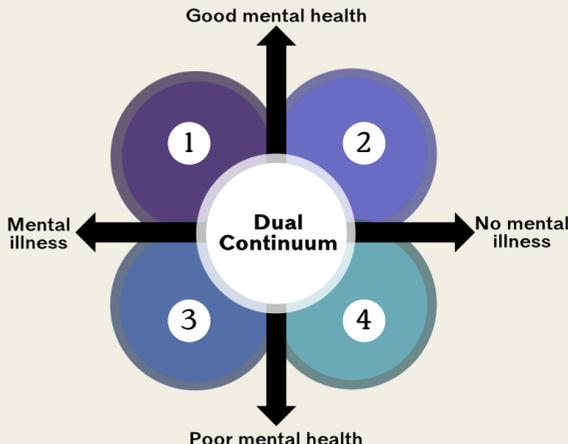


## Mental Illness

Implies that a person has received a clinical diagnosis and/or is experiencing clinically significant symptoms of a mental illness.

## Mental Health & Mental Illness Continuum

This model conceptualizes mental health and mental illness as separate, but interconnected continuums. Mental health can range from good to poor, sitting anywhere along that spectrum.



## Statistics



**75%** of mental illnesses occur before age 25<sup>1</sup>



**50%** of Canadians will have experienced a mental illness by age 40<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 5 Canadians** report poor mental health or a mental illness<sup>2</sup>

## Risk Factors



### Social

- Lack of social support
- Low socioeconomic status
- Exposure to discrimination



### Biological

- Genetic vulnerabilities
- Health comorbidities



### Psychological

- Prolonged exposure to stress
- Traumatic experience(s)

## Mental Healthcare in Canada

The majority of services are not considered “medically necessary” and are paid for out-of-pocket or covered by insurance

While mental illness accounts for approximately 10% of the burden of disease in Ontario, it receives just 7% of health care dollars<sup>3</sup>

Each type of care provider is qualified to offer different types of treatment



### Family Doctors

Prescribe medication, but do not typically provide psychotherapy



### Psychologists

Provide psychotherapy but cannot prescribe medication



### Psychiatrists

Can prescribe medication and offer psychotherapy

Not everyone struggling with mental health will require medication and/or psychotherapy to recover and may benefit from lower-intensity options

## Post-Secondary Students

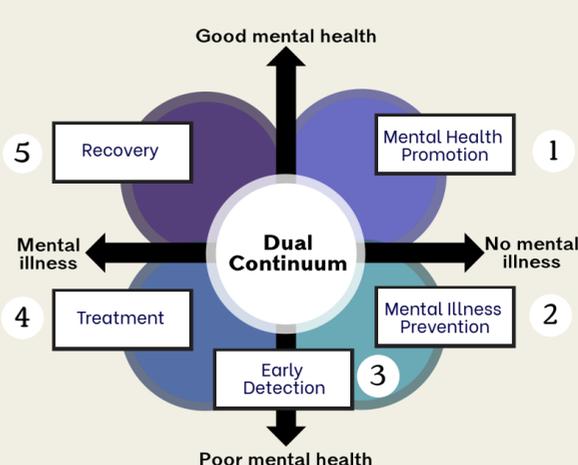
Note that post-secondary students can access both physical and mental health services from their **Student Wellness Services (SWS)** on campus. The practitioners at your SWS will be happy to work with your family doctor back home to put together a treatment plan that works best for you.



## The Mental Health Service Continuum

Describes the different levels of mental health care. There is a relationship shown between the **level of need** and the **intensity of care** provided

**Upstream services** aim to intervene prior to the development of symptoms (**mental health promotion, mental illness prevention**), while **downstream** are intended for intervention following symptom development (**treatment and recovery**)



## Barriers to Help-Seeking

Almost **1 in 5** Canadians needed mental health care in 2018, and only **1/2** of them felt that their needs were fully met<sup>4</sup>

Three of the most common barriers to seeking help for mental health related issues in Canada are **accessibility, affordability, and stigma**.



### Individual-level

- Impact of the symptoms of mental illness
- Side effects of medication
- Episodic nature of mental illness
- Educational disadvantage
- Self-stigma
- Logistical (i.e., financial burden, unaccommodating work schedule, transportation)



### Community-level

- Community and workplace stigma
- Low expectations for healthcare professionals
- Lack of culturally appropriate care
- Language barriers (i.e., care not provided in language other than English)

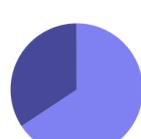


### System-level

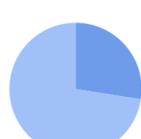
- Disincentives caused by the income support system
- Lack of intersectoral collaboration between mental health and employment services
- Lack of available services due to limited practitioners
- Lack of timely care (i.e., long wait times for care)

## Student Mental Health Stats (NCHA, 2019)<sup>5</sup>

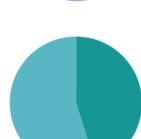
Within the past 12 months,



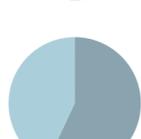
**65.7%** of students felt overwhelmed



**13%** of students seriously considered suicide



**45.1%** felt so depressed it was hard to function



**45.5%** rated their stress “more than average” with **13.4%** experiencing tremendous stress

## References

- 1 Kessler RC, Amminger GP, Aguilar-Gaxiola S, Alonso J, Lee S, Utsun TB. Age of onset of mental disorders: a review of recent literature: Curr Opin Psychiatry. 2007 Jul;20(4):359-64.
- 2 Fast Facts about Mental Health and Mental Illness [Internet]. CMHA National. [cited 2022 Jun 27]. Available from: <https://cmha.ca/brochure/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/>
- 3 The Crisis is Real [Internet]. CAMH. [cited 2022 Jun 27]. Available from: <https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real>
- 4 Mental health care needs, 2018 [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jun 27]. Available from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-625-x/2019001/article/00011-eng.htm>
- 5 American College Health Association. National College Health Assessment II [Internet]. 2019. Available from: <https://www.cacuss.ca/files/Research/NCHA-II%20SPRING%202019%20CANADIAN%20REFERENCE%20GROUP%20EXECUTIVE%20SUMMARY.pdf>