

Introduction

What is Health promotion and how does it relate to your health?

- Your health is always important – It is important whether you are feeling sick or well, whether you have any medical problems, and especially when you have new issues such as losing your home or stable housing.
- The goal of health promotion is to keep you healthy while you are OK and help you to become healthier when you have a medical problem. This can be challenging when you are in a new place like a shelter, and you may need additional assistance to improve your health.
- Health promotion is done to keep you healthy for a long time.
- Health promotion is a part of care coordination, where different people involved in caring for your health, including yourself, work together to give you the best care possible.

What is your role in staying healthy?

- Your health and the chance to make healthy decisions are in your hands, however you do not have to feel alone when facing problems with your health.
- Although you play an important role in staying healthy, your community, shelter, and health providers also make important decisions and choices that affect your health.
- One way to participate in health promotion is to become more familiar with some of the aspects of your own health.

What can you do if you have a health related question or concern?

There are several people who can help you with questions or concerns about your health. In addition to the medical providers which may be present in your shelter, you can always turn to your Shelter Case Manager and your health home or other care coordinator.

Physical Health Conditions

- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Back Pain
- Cardiovascular-Heart Disease
- COPD Bronchitis and Emphysema
- Diabetes
- Foot Care
- Hypertension-High Blood Pressure
- Oral Health
- And More

Mental Health Conditions

- Anxiety
- Bipolar Disorder
- Depression
- Schizophrenia
- Childhood Anxiety
- Developmental Delays
- And More

Physical Health Condition

Arthritis

What is it?

- There are several types of arthritis, meaning diseases affecting the joints (hand, hips, knees, feet).
- The most common is osteoarthritis, which causes pain and stiffness in joints, which is from “wear and tear” from walking and moving.
- Arthritis is can be painful and can limit people’s ability to stay active.
- Some people need X-rays or blood tests to tell what type of arthritis they have, but most of the time, speaking with a doctor about symptoms is enough to be diagnosed.

Why is it important to treat it?

- The medications used to treat arthritis, especially osteoarthritis, are the same medications most people use to treat aches and pains, **and do not necessarily change the arthritis itself.**
- Since **arthritis can significantly limit ability to move**, it is important to stop it from progressing.
- People with arthritis should **stay active and lose weight if overweight.**
- While people with arthritis may need to decrease or change their activity because of pain and discomfort, **they need to continue moving and stretching** (talk to your doctor first!)
- In some forms of arthritis, medications can be given to slow or stop the disease

Arthritis and emergencies.

Arthritis itself generally does not cause emergencies, however **someone who is seriously affected may be more prone to falls and injuries.**

What can you do if you have arthritis?

- For all types of arthritis, paying attention to mobility and staying active is important.
- **Stay as active as possible.** This many mean that in order to keep walking, you have to avoid using stairs because using stairs causes enough pain to limit your ability to walk.
- You may need help from someone to get supportive devices like canes or crutches if needed, and to prevent people from feeling isolated while they are in your shelter by engaging them in activities.
- You may need to request an accessible shelter if your arthritis causes a disability.
- Physical therapy may reduce pain the same amount as pain medications.

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Physical Health Condition

Asthma

What is it?

- Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs and can cause severe difficulty breathing if it is not controlled properly.
- It usually starts in childhood and can stay with someone into adulthood depending on how severe it is or what triggers it.
- Asthma can be triggered or worsened by smoking, dust, or exercise.
- People with asthma may have wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness and coughing.
- They may also have “attacks” when these symptoms come on suddenly.

Why is treating asthma important?

- When asthma is well-controlled and treated properly, the chance that a person will have an “attack” is much lower.
- Asthma can be treated with different types of medications including medications that are taken every day, to prevent attacks, and medications such as inhalers which are only used when asthma attacks occur.
- Treating asthma and taking all medications as recommended can lead to fewer attacks.
- Part of asthma treatment is identifying and eliminating triggers, such as **tobacco smoke, mites, pests and mold, which may increase asthma attacks.**

Asthma and emergencies.

- Managing asthma on a daily basis can reduce attacks that need emergency care
- Regardless of how well asthma is controlled, **there is always a chance for an attack, and this may require hospitalization.**
- A severe attack limits a person’s ability to breathe properly and must be dealt with in a hospital with the help of emergency medications.

What can you do if you have asthma?

- **Keep living space that is free of dust.** Dust is easy to see on some surfaces such as wood and plastic than can be cleaned, but it can build up in fabrics and carpets.
- Pests including cockroaches and rats can cause asthma flares. If these are a concern, work with your housing provider to address pest control issues.
- If you find that you are using inhalers frequently or need repeat medical attention for asthma attacks, you should be seen by a provider to find ways to better control the attacks.
- When selecting housing options, clients can request that carpets and curtains be removed.
- Cigarette smoke can also trigger asthma. **Avoid areas where people are smoking.**
- If you smoke yourself, ask for resources to help you quit.

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Physical Health Condition

Back pain

What is it?

- Back pain, and especially lower back pain, is extremely common, affecting 9 out of 10 people.
- Some common of back pain are lifting or pushing heavy objects, sitting, standing or sleeping in positions that put stress on the back, and wear and tear of the back over time.
- Most people who develop back pain recover in 4-8 weeks. When your back pain does not get better in this time, or if it comes and goes frequently for weeks at a time, you may have chronic back pain.
- Many of the time, there is no known cause for the back pain.
- If your back pain also comes with numbness or weakness in your legs, or changes in your bathroom habits, it may be caused by something more complex than a strain and a doctor should evaluate you.

How can you prevent back pain from getting worse?

- **Staying active** improves the strength of your back and can make it less likely to get an injury.
- Being homeless means that you may be exposed to difficult physical environments, where you have to lift or move your belongings, sleep in unfamiliar areas, and get used to new surroundings. **Take care to get to know your environment as quickly as possible.**

Back pain and emergencies:

While most back pain is the result of mechanical strain as discussed above, **sometimes it can be a sign of something more serious.** If your back pain does not improve or has worrisome signs like changes in strength or sensation, you may need to be seen by a medical provider.

What should you do if you have back pain or if your back pain worsens?

- Homeless persons are much more likely to have chronic, or ongoing, back pain.
- Staying active has been shown to be better for back pain than staying in bed. **You should do your best to stay as active as possible.**
- While staying active is important, **overdoing is also harmful.** Take care not to cause additional strain or injury.
- Some over-the-counter medicine can help with back pain. **Prescription pain medicine do not improve back pain.**
- If your back pain is sudden or severe, or if it sends shooting pains to your legs, causes numbness, pins and needles, or weakness, **you should seek medical attention.**

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Physical Health Condition

Cardiovascular-Heart Disease

What is it?

- Cardiovascular disease is a number of different conditions including hardening of the blood vessels especially in the heart or brain, clogged arteries from high cholesterol, prior heart attack, heart failure, or problems with blood vessels in the legs.
- People with cardiovascular disease may have one or more health problems that lead to a more serious complication. These health problems can include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, being overweight or obese, smoking, and lack of physical activity.
- Family history, when a health problem “runs in the family” can increase your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Why is treating cardiovascular disease important?

- People with cardiovascular disease have a higher chance of heart attack, stroke, or congestive heart failure, **all of which can be deadly**. They may also have problems with circulation to the legs, which can cause pain or lead to amputations.
- Cardiovascular disease is one of the main reasons why people die at a younger age than expected.

Cardiovascular disease and emergencies

- **People with cardiovascular disease are more prone to emergencies such as heart attacks** – when the heart cannot get enough blood supply to keep pumping, or strokes when the brain cannot get enough blood supply to keep working.
- Heart attacks and strokes are emergencies and require you to be taken to a hospital.
- If you have any symptoms such as chest pain, pain that spreads to the arm, neck or shoulder, or chest pain that comes with throwing up, sweating, and dizziness, **you may be having a heart attack**.
- If you have sudden weakness or numbness in the face, arm or leg, sudden intense headache, difficulty speaking, or changes in your vision, **you may be having a stroke**.

What should you do if you have cardiovascular disease?

- People with cardiovascular disease often need multiple medications at different times of the day.
- When you are homeless, it can be more difficult to keep track of these needs. Shelter and clinic staff can help you manage some of these issues until you are able to manage them yourself.
- If you smoke, seek help to quit as soon as possible. **Smoking worsens every part of cardiovascular disease**.
- Do your best to maintain a healthy diet. Request meals foods that are heart healthy.

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Physical Health Condition

COPD, Bronchitis and Emphysema

What is it?

- COPD – or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is a lung disease that gets worse over time and most commonly affects people that smoke.
- It can eventually cause difficulty breathing, breathlessness, and make it hard for your lungs to get oxygen to the rest of your body.
- COPD is sometimes called chronic bronchitis, emphysema, or both.
- In COPD, the tiny air sacs in the lung and the tubes that carry air to your lungs become damaged and swollen. Both of these things makes it harder to breathe.

Why is it important to treat?

- People with COPD can have exacerbations – when their breathing suddenly gets worse – and need to be hospitalized, sometimes with a breathing tube or machine.
- Serious complications from COPD can be reduced or prevented if it is managed properly by a doctor with medications and inhalers.
- The better that COPD is managed on a day to day basis, the better you will breathe, the healthier you will feel, and the lower the chance that you will need to use emergency or hospital.

COPD exacerbation and emergencies:

- If you experience increased or worsening wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, or cough with mucus, **you may be developing an exacerbation.**
- Some people with exacerbations need their medications adjusted, while others need to go to the hospital.
- **Alert shelter staff if you ever have difficulty breathing or worsening.**

What should you do if you have COPD?

- If you smoke, quit smoking. **Smoking is the leading cause of COPD and continues to make your lungs and breathing worse.**
- Some people with COPD need medications including inhalers to control their COPD. It is important that you take and use your medications all the time.
- If you use oxygen, you will need to make sure that you keep your supply available. You may need to work with a new provider to get supplies while you are in a shelter.
- Avoid units, dorms or spaces with fabrics, carpets or other things that can worsen your breathing.
- A small cold or cough can turn into a bigger problem if you have COPD. **Make sure that you get your flu shot, as well as vaccines for pneumonia.**

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Physical Health Condition

Diabetes

What is it?

- Diabetes is a disease where a person's body cannot use sugar in food properly for energy, so that they have a higher than normal amount of sugar in their blood
- Type 1 diabetes usually occurs in childhood and is a lifelong condition. People with Type 1 diabetes must use a medication known as insulin, usually with injections, to keep their sugar levels in a healthy range.
- Type 2 diabetes usually occurs in adults when the body cannot process the sugar in the blood because it cannot use insulin properly, or when there is too little insulin
- **Many people can have diabetes without knowing it.**
- People who have diabetes and are on treatment with pills or insulin but do not eat enough may have too low blood sugar, which is also dangerous.

Why is treating it important?

- **Uncontrolled diabetes can cause a number of complications and disability**, including kidney problems, blindness, infections and amputations.
- These complications can be prevented if blood sugar is kept normal by **taking medications, eating a healthy diet and being active.**
- Well controlled diabetes leaves people feeling better and reduces the need for frequent medical visits or needing to go to the hospital.
- Some diabetics also need to do finger blood tests to monitor their sugar level.

Diabetes and emergencies

- Problems from diabetes or the medications used to treat diabetes **can lead to emergencies.**
- **Some diabetes medicines can cause the sugar in the blood to go too low**, especially if the person didn't eat enough, which can cause seizures or someone passing out.
- If the blood sugar is too high, the person can become dehydrated, with extreme fatigue, lack of energy and even loss of consciousness.
- **Any of these signs or symptoms should prompt medical care or emergency care.**

What can you do if you have diabetes?

- Diabetics need regular medical care from multiple healthcare providers: you may need to ask for help to get and keep appointments, to get medication, and to develop a care plan
- **Access to healthy foods is essential.** It is also important to keep a meal routine from day to day. This decreases the chance of a problem from too-high or too-low sugars.
- Homelessness increases stress, loss of routine, and decreases the ability to get enough sleep and exercise. All of these can affect sugar levels.

What can you do if you have a health-related question or concern?

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Physical Health Condition

Foot Care

What is it?

- Taking care of your feet involves care for the skin, nails and the whole foot.
- Your feet are what keep you moving forward, and it is essential to maintain good foot care for staying active and mobile, and preventing complications such as infections and pain.
- **Once a foot problem occurs, it is essential to get treatment or care for it right away before it becomes something more serious.**

What are some common foot problems?

- Foot problems can affect the skin: such as blisters, calluses, warts or wounds.
- They can also affect the nails and toes: such as ingrown toenails or fungus on your toes.
- Some people are prone to more complicated foot problems: such as diabetic foot infections or wounds and ulcers from blood vessel disease.

How can you tell if you have a foot problem?

- Sometimes it is easy to tell if you have a foot problem because you may experience pain or discomfort at the site of the problem.
- Other times, you may need to look at your foot to see if a problem is starting. **The best ways to tell if something is starting is to look at your feet twice a day.**

What are things that you can do to prevent a foot problem from occurring?

- Everyone needs comfortable shoes and socks to keep feet healthy. We also need to keep our nails trimmed and healthy for good foot care.
- **It is important to keep your feet warm and dry.** This is important in the winter, and whenever it rains.
- Always remove your socks and allow your feet, shoes and socks to dry completely.

What should you do if you have had foot problems in the past?

- If you have had foot problems in the past, there is a higher chance that you may develop them again. **You need to take extra care when cutting your nails.**
- If you are diabetic, you may already have a foot caretaker or medical provider. If you develop a new wound or ulcer, **you should seek medical treatment for this before it becomes a bigger problem.**
- The goal of foot care is to prevent loss of tissue from wounds, infections, or even amputations, and to keep you as mobile and healthy as possible. **Make sure you include your feet as part of your daily hygiene routine.**

What can you do if you have a health-related question or concern?

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Physical Health Condition

Hypertension/High Blood Pressure

What is it?

- **High blood pressure and hypertension are the same thing.**
- Having hypertension means that the force of the blood running in the blood vessels is too high.
- Most people with hypertension do not have any symptoms related to it and find out that they have high blood pressure when they are told by their doctor.
- The chance of having high blood pressure and needing treatment **increases as you get older.**
- Blood pressure is reported with 2 numbers – normal blood pressure is 120/80 or lower. When someone's blood pressure is above 130/80, they can be diagnosed with hypertension (high blood pressure).

Why is treating it important?

- **Hypertension can cause serious problems**, including heart attacks and strokes, which are leading causes of death.
- With treatment, which includes taking medications, having a healthy diet, exercise, and not smoking, people can reduce their chance of a serious complication.
- Most people with high blood pressure need to take at least one medication every day and need to see a doctor at least once a year, or more if they have complications or need to adjust their medications.

Hypertension and emergencies

- Sometimes, hypertension can be related to an emergency, such as heart attack or a stroke, or directly cause severe headache, changes in vision, or sharp chest pain as a result of a very high blood pressure.
- **If any of these symptoms occur, call 911 for emergency medical attention, or alert someone about the emergency.**
- In most cases, high blood pressure can be treated effectively with medications and emergency situations can be avoided.

What can you do if you have hypertension?

- Homeless adults are 2-4 times more likely than other adults to have hypertension and have high blood pressure at younger ages than other people.
- Many complications from hypertension can be prevented if you receive the proper treatment and manage your condition, including taking medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- Eating healthy, low salt foods is also important for people with hypertension: **request a heart-healthy diet and make smart choices if you have high blood pressure.**

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Physical Health Condition

Oral Health

What is it?

- Oral health is the health of your teeth, gums and inside of your mouth.
- The health of these things can be related to and affect your overall health, nutrition, infections, and other conditions.

Why is it important to keep good oral health?

- Good oral health helps a person's ability to chew and eat healthy foods, speak and smile, and improves confidence – for speaking with strangers, getting a job, or making new friends.
- Healthy teeth and gums help prevent cavities, tooth pain, and infections, which are very uncomfortable and **can lead to emergency situations**.

How can the shelter help you with oral health?

- If you have not seen a dentist in more than a year, even if you do not have a tooth problem, **it can help to be seen to clean and check your teeth**.
- If you are having a tooth or gum problem, you should request assistance to get the proper care that you need to the problem does not become more serious.
- If you need supplies, such as toothpaste or a toothbrush, you can request these from the shelter. **You should change your toothbrush every 3 months**.

Dental emergencies

- Though most dental emergencies do not put your life at risk, they can be extremely painful and uncomfortable. **Seek dental care as soon as possible if you have any oral health problem to avoid emergency visits and pain.**
- Very rarely, a tooth problem such as an abscess or infection can spread and require emergency room care.

How do you keep good oral health?

- The basics of oral health include **cleaning your teeth and gums at least twice a day**.
- You should use a soft toothbrush, fluoride toothpaste and regular tap water to brush.
- If you feel a problem starting, such as tooth pain, or have a broken tooth, **do not wait to get care** because the problem can worsen quickly and without warning.

What can you do if you have a health-related question or concern?

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Mental Health Condition

Anxiety

What is it?

- Occasional anxiety or stress are a normal part of life. Some people however, feel anxious all the time, to the point that it interferes with their ability to live their life, keep their job, pay their bills, and have meaningful relationships with friends and family.
- People with anxiety disorder feel irritable, restless and worry more often than not. They frequently feel that they cannot control their worry.
- Some people have panic attacks that are sudden and unexpected. Panic Attacks are intense fear along with a pounding heart, sweating, shaking, or a sensation that they cannot catch their breath.
- Anxiety **may accompany other mental health disorders** such as depression and obsessive compulsive disorder.

Why is it important to treat anxiety?

- Anxiety can be treated with therapy, medications, or both. A health professional can work with you to decide what is right for you. **If you have been prescribed treatment, it is important to continue that treatment.** Support groups can also be helpful to help deal with new stress and emotions during this period of homelessness.
- **Anxiety that is not treated or managed can interfere with your ability to take care of things that you need to do to keep your life going.** You may not be prepared for a job interview, or to discuss your needs with a landlord.
- Controlling anxiety can lead to a less stressful, more enjoyable and more fulfilled life.
- Managing your symptoms from anxiety can help you be more healthy overall, and manage other medical conditions better.

Anxiety and emergencies:

- A panic attack from anxiety **can sometimes cause the same signs and symptoms as a heart attack, or other medical emergency.** The best way to avoid such confusion is to prevent panic attacks from happening by using medication as directed, and using therapy techniques from your provider to manage your condition.
- If you feel that you are overwhelmed, out of control, and need help for any reason, contact shelter staff for assistance. In addition, contact **NYC-WELL** at **1-888-NYCWELL**, text to **65173** or open a chat on their website at **<https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>** for free crisis counseling, peer support, information and referral to behavioral health services that meet a person's insurance (or lack thereof) requirements, location and language preferences, or for a mobile crisis team to come to you in 2-48 hours

What should you do if you have anxiety?

- If you are already being treated for anxiety or have been treated in the past, make sure you discuss this with your medical provider.
- Engage in support groups, this might reduce your stress and help you deal with changes during times of transition.
- If you take medications, take them as directed by a medical professional.

Mental Health Condition

Bipolar Disorder

What is it?

- Bipolar disorder is a type of mood disorder. It does not usually involve mood swings, but rather periods of days or weeks where you may feel depressed and hopeless, followed by periods where you feel manic, abnormally high or irritable, or have thoughts that are not set in reality.
- A second form of bipolar disorder, called bipolar II, is when people have the same severe on-and-off depression, but in between, they do not have the same mood elevation. The less intense mood elevation is called hypomania.
- Many people with bipolar disorder are not correctly diagnosed initially, and therefore, may not receive the best treatment right away. Bipolar disorder is diagnosed by a mental health professional, and can require lifelong treatment.

Why is it important to treat bipolar disorder?

- With proper treatment, people with bipolar disorder can lead fulfilling lives.
- Since bipolar disorder involves both aspects of depression and psychosis (associated with manic symptoms, when thoughts are not set in reality), it can have varying effects on people's lives. It is one of the leading causes of disability from a mental health disorder because it can affect a person's ability to function on a day to day basis.
- When a person with bipolar disorder is in a depressed phase, they are at risk of hurting themselves or others, and even of suicide. This can be prevented with proper treatment and management.
- Having bipolar disorder and mental illness in general can make it much harder to manage other medical problems.
- When mental illness is not properly cared for, it raises the chance that someone can become homeless.

What can you do if you have bipolar disorder?

- Whether you are having symptoms currently or not, it is important to discuss your condition with a health professional and shelter staff. Staff will be able to link you with health providers and other resources to improve your chance of finding a job, housing, and avoid homelessness in the future.
- Make sure that you stay on your treatment, even if you are not having symptoms.
- If you need assistance with your treatment such as medications or medication costs, alert shelter staff and your healthcare provider.
- Stay connected to your support system or ask shelter staff to link you to community support and groups.
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Bipolar disorder and emergencies:

- A mental health crisis can happen when you consider hurting yourself or someone around you, and you may not be thinking clearly about your actions or their consequences. This is considered an emergency, and you will need to be evaluated for urgent treatment and to protect your safety.
- If you have any thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else, or feel that you are losing control of aspects of your life, reach out to a shelter staff immediately.

Mental Health Condition

Depression

What is it?

- Depression is a mood disorder, a type of mental illness.
- Signs of depression include feeling sad often or all of the time, losing interest in the things that you used to enjoy, feeling guilty, feeling worthless, feeling irritable or agitated, overeating or losing your appetite, trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much, or having thoughts of hurting or killing yourself.
- Sadness and “hard times” are a part of everyone’s life, but **depression is different** – negative feelings begin to interfere with a person’s ability to function in their lives, interact with friends and family, keep their job, or pay their bills, for example.
- Serious depression can affect someone’s judgement, and lead a person to have thoughts of suicide, hurting themselves, or hurting others.
- Mood disorders like depression are common, affecting **1 of every 6 people at some point in their lives**, and are even more common among persons experiencing homelessness, affecting more than half of all people who have ever been homeless.
- Depression can also be seen as part of, or in combination with other mental illnesses such as **bipolar disorder, anxiety, substance use and addiction**.

Why is it important to treat depression?

- Most people with depression are able to have productive and fulfilling lives with the help of medical attention. Common treatments for depression include medications and/or therapy or counseling.
- In times of stress or transition such as during homelessness, symptoms of depression may worsen. **It is important to keep up with your treatments during and after homelessness.** We know that when people with depression are treated, they are much less likely to become homeless again.
- Depression can affect many different aspects of life, **including chronic medical conditions and overall health**, making it even more important to treat depression.

Depression and Emergencies

- A mental health crisis should be treated as an emergency to ensure safety. **If you have thoughts of hurting yourself, killing yourself, or anyone else, seek help immediately by calling 911 and contact any shelter staff for assistance.**
- Getting treatment for depression is the best way to prevent a situation where you are at risk of hurting yourself or someone else.

What can you do if you have depression?

- The most important things to do are to continue treatment if you are already being treated, or seek another treatment provider if you have lost your provider.
- Contact **NYC-WELL** at **1-888-NYCWELL**, text to **65173** or open a chat on their website at <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/> for free crisis counseling, peer support, information and referral to behavioral health services that meet a person’s insurance (or lack thereof) requirements, location and language preferences, or for a mobile crisis team to come to you in 2-48 hours.

Mental Health Condition

Schizophrenia

What is it?

- Schizophrenia is a serious mental health disorder that affects how someone thinks, sees the world, responds to emotions, and interacts with others.
- Schizophrenia can lead someone to hear voices that are not there, or have thoughts and ideas that do not fit into reality. These can sometimes cause someone to think that they are in danger, or that there is something or someone that is trying to hurt them, called paranoia.
- A person with schizophrenia can have difficulty with many aspects of life, including keeping a job, paying bills, staying in stable housing, and maintaining relationships with family and friends. **When severe, these can lead to significant disability.** Hence, schizophrenia is more common among homeless individuals.
- People with schizophrenia who stabilize in treatment may have weeks or months where they do not have any, or only mild symptoms.

Why is it important to treat it?

- Getting treatment for schizophrenia can help someone have healthy relationships, keep a job, and have secure and stable housing.
- When someone with schizophrenia is not thinking clearly, it affects their ability to manage activities of independent living, they may hurt themselves or others, and **treatment can prevent this.**
- Schizophrenia can make it difficult to manage other medical problems such as high blood pressure or diabetes. This makes it important for your overall health to get and keep treatment for schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia and Emergencies

- A mental health crisis happens when you are at risk of hurting yourself or others. Sometimes this happens because you are not in control of your thoughts and actions. **If you have any thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else, make sure you tell someone immediately.**
- Sticking with a treatment plan is the best way to prevent emergencies and crises related to schizophrenia and other mental health disorders.
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What can you do if you have schizophrenia?

- Shelter staff and medical providers will help you get connected to the care that you need. **Sometimes, people with schizophrenia cannot tell on their own when their condition is getting worse,** and need those around them to help stay on top of managing their disease.
- Medications that help you think more clearly may come in the form of pills, or longer-term injections. You may need help and support to manage your condition and reminders to take your medication as prescribed.
- You will need to continue treatment even when you feel better and symptoms have subsided to keep you doing well.
- Stay focused on goals to help keep yourself moving in the right direction.

Mental Health Condition

Childhood Anxiety

What is Anxiety?

- Anxiety disorders are more than temporary fear or worry – people with anxiety disorders often have ongoing, intense, and excessive worry about everyday situations that affect school, friendships, and home life.
- Anxiety can make children and adolescents short-tempered and angry. Symptoms are sometimes hard to spot when children keep their worries to themselves.
- Anxiety can be caused by genetics, stress, or big life changes. Experiencing homelessness can make anxiety worse in children. ACS involvement, family trauma, stress, not having stability at home and in school, family separation, and loss of friends due to moving can add to anxiety.
- There are several types of anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and phobia disorders. Anxiety disorders are very common, with rates as high as 15-20% in children and adolescents.
- Some anxious behaviors are normal in children. Consider speaking to a health professional if your child's anxiety starts to affect their everyday life.
- When considering a diagnosis of anxiety, refer the child to a doctor that can check for possible medical causes such as thyroid problems, heart arrhythmias, or use of certain medications.

What factors contribute to anxiety?

- **Medical problems** – Physical health conditions including chronic diseases such as congenital heart disease, diabetes, asthma, developmental disorders, and caffeine or other substances and medications in older children, can make symptoms of anxiety worse
- **Existing Mental Health Disorders** – Children with ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and depression are more likely to develop anxiety
- **Genetics** – Children of parents with anxiety, depression or other mental illnesses are more likely to develop anxiety disorders
- **Environment** – Exposure to stressful surroundings, traumatic life events, poverty, abuse, instability, death of family members, and overprotective parenting or rejection is associated with anxiety in children
- **Temperament** – Children with personality traits such as shyness, fear in unfamiliar situations, irritability, frequent mood swings, and very intense emotions may be more likely to develop anxiety disorders.

Why is it important to treat anxiety?

- Childhood anxiety is often linked to anxiety in adulthood, especially when untreated
- Children with untreated anxiety can develop poor coping skills, such as avoidance, that only reinforce their anxiety
- Untreated anxiety can lead to problems in school, low self-esteem, and depression

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety in Children:

Pre-School Age (0-5 years)

- Fear of loud noises, heights, and strangers
- Prefers to play alone or watch others play
- Must be held to go to sleep, or does not want to sleep alone
- Becomes overly upset when separated
- Fear of the dark

School Age (6-12 years)

- Refusal to go to school
- Overly concerned with cleanliness
- Fear of getting sick or hurt
- Nervous in social situations
- Insomnia or bad dreams
- Aches, pain, nausea with no medical cause
- Fear of unfamiliar things
- Frequent urination

Teens (13+ years)

- Low self-esteem and/or lack of self-confidence
- Overly concerned about war, politics, the economy, or family relationships
- Fear of failure and/or criticism
- Trouble focusing in school
- Aches, pain, nausea, or fatigue with no medical cause
- Avoids social situations, or fears being alone
- Easily irritable with out of control outbursts
- Not eating properly

When is the best time to screen?

- Some anxious behaviors are normal in children. For example, at 12 – 18 months, many children show signs of separation anxiety and school age children may experience some social anxiety.

Speak to a health professional if:

- Anxiety starts to affect a child's daily life. For example, when combined with avoidance behavior or when anxiety becomes severe, excessive, and persistent
- The child's behavior is very different from other children of the same age
- The child's reactions are unusually severe

Keep in mind that young children may not have the ability to communicate their distress and emotions clearly. Therefore, symptoms of anxiety may be visible. Consult with all adults involved in the child's care (parents, teachers, etc.) to help determine if the child should be referred for further care.

Prescreening questions (For children 6 years or older)

Please review the following questions with the child's parent or caregiver. If they answer yes to one or more questions, please refer the child to a mental health provider.

1. Does your child have exaggerated fears of people, places, objects, or things that interfere with their social, academic, or home life?
2. Does your child worry excessively about everyday events and activities?
3. Does your child appear anxious when interacting with peers or in social settings?
4. Does your child often refuse to go to school, or has there been a decline in their classroom performance?
5. Does your child experience many nightmares, headaches, or stomachaches?
6. Does your child experience a pounding heart, shortness of breath, or clamminess for no apparent reason?

7. Does your child worry excessively about their competence or compare their performance to other kids?
8. Does your child throw tantrums, cry, or refuse to leave a familiar person when necessary?

Treatment Options

Anxiety is often treated with psychotherapy, medication, or a combination of both. Treatment options should be discussed with a medical provider who can screen for other mood disorders or physical conditions that can cause anxiety-like symptoms. Client and family education about the risks and benefits of treatment and follow-up should be included.

Where to go for help

- Talk to a doctor, psychologist, or school counselor if your child is experiencing anything listed above
- Call: **NYC Well (1-888-692-9355)** or Text: **"WELL"** to **65173**, available 24/7w
- Clients should consult with their physician for further treatment options

What can parents/caregivers do to help the child?

- Spend time outdoors and eat healthy foods
- Create a daily routine and stick to it when possible
- Participate in at least an hour of physical activity daily
- Get the recommended amount of sleep every night
- Practice mindfulness or relaxation techniques
- Follow the treatment plan as specified by a mental health professional

Developmental Delays

What are developmental delays?

- Developmental delays are more than just being a little behind in one area of development. A developmental delay means a child is constantly behind in gaining the skills expected by a certain age.
- All children develop skills at different rates, minor delays in one area are not necessarily a cause for concern.

Developmental delays occur in one of four areas

- **Cognitive Delays:** can cause learning difficulties, awareness issues, and affect a child's intellectual functioning, reasoning, and remembering
- **Motor Delays:** affect a child's ability to coordinate large muscles groups such as those in arms, legs, or hands
- **Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Delays:** impact a child's ability to learn, communicate, and interact with others and can cause difficulty with social and emotional skills
- **Speech Delays:** affect understanding words, reduced vocabulary or speech production.

Global developmental delays occur when children up to the age of 5 experience significant delays in two or more areas lasting more than 6 months.

An estimated 15% of children in the US have one or more developmental delays. But, less than 1/5 of these children receive early intervention services.

In most situations, the cause of a delay is unknown and it is not the caregiver's fault. Some children naturally develop slower and will need more help.

What factors contribute to developmental delays?

- **Genetics** – conditions like Down syndrome or muscular dystrophy, having a sibling with autism spectrum disorder, achondroplasia
- **Pregnancy and Birth complications** – smoking or drinking during pregnancy, lack of oxygen during delivery, premature birth, low birth weight, multiple births (twins, triplets, etc.), infections during pregnancy
- **Medical problems** – poor eyesight or hearing, untreated newborn jaundice, chronic ear infections, vision problems, meningitis, seizure disorders, shaken baby syndrome, cerebral palsy, different limb lengths, problems with muscles controlling speech
- **Environment** – malnutrition, physical abuse or neglect, exposure of mother or child to high levels of environmental toxins (such as lead), trauma, unstable family situations
- In most situations, the cause of a delay is unknown and it is not the caregiver's fault. Some children naturally develop slower and will need more support.

When is the best time to screen?

- Early detection and intervention are key in helping children develop skills. All parents and caregivers should be encouraged to monitor their child's development from birth.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends developmental and behavioral screening for all children during regular visits at 9 months, 18 months, and 30 months
- The AAP also recommends that all children be screened for autism spectrum disorder during regular visits at 18 months and 24 months.
- If the child is at higher risk due to any of the risk factors above, their medical provider may discuss additional screening

Developmental Milestones

Developmental milestones are a set of skills that most children can perform by a specific age. Below is a non-exhaustive list from the CDC of age-specific developmental milestones. A more comprehensive list can be found on the CDC website, linked under Sources.

Review the below developmental milestones. If there are concerns that a child is not meeting the typical milestones, the parent or caregiver should raise this with a pediatrician who can take a closer look.

Why is it important to treat?

Early intervention and treatment are key. They can help children improve certain skills and not fall behind their peers. Eligible children can get free therapy and social service for developmental delays through the public school system or Early Intervention program.

Age	Motor	Speech	Social/Emotional	Cognitive
2 months	Can hold head up and push up when on tummy	Turns head towards sounds, coos	Can smile at people, recognizes caregivers	Follows things with eyes, pays attention to faces
4-5 months	Can hold head up unsupported, pushes down on legs when feet are on hard surface	Begins to babble, imitates sounds	Copies movements and facial expressions	Responds to affection, can let you know if they are happy or sad
6 months	Can roll over in both directions, sit without support	Responds to name, begins making consonant sounds	Recognizes strangers, responds to emotions of others	Passes things from one hand to the other, brings things to mouth
9 months	Crawls, can stand with support	Understands "no", points at things	May be clingy, afraid of strangers	Plays peek-a-boo, picks up small items between thumb and index finger
1 year	May stand without support or take a few steps without holding on	Uses simple gestures, responds to simple requests, imitates words	Cries when caregivers leave, shows fear, repeats sounds or actions for attention	Finds hidden things easily, puts things in a container, uses items correctly (hairbrush, cup)
2 years	Stands on tiptoe, begins to run, can climb onto furniture without help	Says 2-4-word sentences, points to things when named	Gets excited with other children, shows defiant behavior	Can sort shapes and colors, build towers, plays simple make-believe games
3 years	Can climb and run easily, pedal a tricycle, walk up and down stairs	Carries on conversations with 2-3 sentences, follows multi-step instructions	Takes turns, shows concern for upset friends, wide range of emotions, can dress self	Can unscrew jar lids or turn door handles,
5 years	Can use the toilet independently, stands on one foot for 10 seconds, hops	Speaks very clearly with full sentences, uses future tense	Wants to please friends, like to sing, dance, act, is aware of gender	Counts 10 or more things, can print some letters or numbers, copies shapes

Treatment options

Treatment options vary based on the child's age and area of delay. Children with motor delays can be treated with physical therapy. Language therapy is available to children with speech delays. Therapists and educators may use behavioral therapy, play therapy, or skill-oriented therapy to help children with cognitive, social, or emotional delays. Additionally, early childhood special education can help stimulate early developmental skills. If appropriate, some behaviors or delays can be treated with medication.

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), eligible infants and toddlers can get services like speech and physical therapy, dietary guidance, or social services. Children can also receive tailored special public education for developmental delays until the age of 21. This includes Early Intervention services for at-risk children from birth to age 3.

Where to go for help:

- Attend regular wellness checks and consult with a physician if you suspect the child may be developmentally delayed
- Use the CDC's free Milestone Tracker app (available in English and Spanish) to track the child's developmental milestones. The app can be found on the App store, Google Play store, or through this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html>

- For young children (birth to 3 years): Call 311 and ask for "Early Intervention". The Early Intervention Program will provide a free evaluation, and services, to eligible children regardless of health insurance or immigration status
- For Children 3 years and older: Speak to your child's school or counselor. The local public school system is required to evaluate children and provide special education and related services if needed. More services can be found by calling 311 and asking for the "Committee on Preschool Special Education".

What can parents/caregivers do to help the child?

- Encourage regular physical activity at home
- Spend time reading to and playing with the child
- Describe objects, emotions, and actions to the child
- Encourage the child to play with other children
- Encourage the child to communicate their emotions
- Provide varied toys that encourage the child to use their hands or play pretend
- Attend regular wellness checks and follow their treatment plan as specified by a healthcare provider