



## Spring 2024

### De-stigmatizing Stigma: Seeking Help for Mental Health Concerns

Each day, thousands of people across the country live with an undiagnosed and untreated mental health issue such as depression or anxiety. While their levels vary in severity, it is important to seek help to move toward a better life. **Doree Ann Espiritu, MD**, Henry Ford Health Medical Director for Behavioral Health Services (Outpatient Division), addresses many of the questions regarding mental health and why people do not seek help when needed.

#### Why do some people not seek help even if they know they are struggling emotionally?

The stigma of depression and, really, any mental health issue, is the primary reason that 80% of people struggling emotionally do not speak up and seek help. Considering 40 million people in the U.S. suffer from depression, that means millions of people suffer in complete silence. Some people still believe that depression is a sign of weakness, or it's related to violence or criminality. These are harmful myths that contribute to stigma. Many patients fear possible repercussions related to career advancement, employment discrimination, exclusion from social circles, judgement from a spouse/partner, etc. There is also self-stigma, where people living with depression believe they are not worthy of receiving help.

#### Does untreated mental health illness affect overall health?

Those with serious mental illness often die decades earlier than they should, driven not by increased suicides or injuries, but poor physical health. We need to encourage them to talk about their stories, which will also help others to seek help.

#### Do cultural barriers impact someone from seeking help?

Yes, they do. The way people think about a cure for mental illness is also influenced by culture. Among Asian, Hispanic and African American communities, it is often believed that a mental illness can be treated or overcome through willpower, heroic stoicism, and avoidance of morbid thoughts rather than by seeking professional help.

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### **How can someone tell if their feelings of sadness/worry have become depression/anxiety?**

Life events can trigger anxiety, depression, sadness, doubt, fear and other normal emotional reactions. If these emotions are starting to affect your ability to function, then it's a sign you need to reach out to someone for help. If you have thoughts about death or not wanting to be around anymore, then an emergency appointment with a mental health professional must happen.

### **What are physical signs of an undiagnosed mental health issue?**

Anxiety symptoms are mostly felt as medical in nature: chest pain, fast heart rate/palpitations, dizziness, high blood pressure. A lot of patients with panic attacks think they are suffering from a heart attack and go to the emergency room several times before they are diagnosed with a panic disorder. Depression can also manifest with vague symptoms like low energy, poor concentration/memory or poor appetite. Patients may attribute these symptoms to a medical problem such as thyroid issues.

### **What is the first step if you think you need help?**

Speak to someone you trust -- Your Primary Care Provider (PCP), pastor, mentor or family member. I want to emphasize that PCPs are trained to evaluate patients for mental health concerns and are eager to help.

### **If you can't get an appointment with your PCP, what can you do?**

Through the GM ConnectedCare plan, you can call the MyCare Advice Line (833-262-1949) and speak with a nurse. And remember, anyone can call 988 – a number that has been established to help those experiencing a mental health crisis.

### **Is counseling and/or medication always part of any treatment plan?**

It depends on the diagnosis, the severity of the symptoms and many other factors. For example, some people are reacting to a certain stressor and do not have a history of depression or anxiety. If the symptoms are mild and the patient's ability to function is not impaired, first treatment is usually counseling/talk therapy to help with coping skills. If symptoms are getting more severe, then medications can be prescribed by the patient's PCP or a psychiatrist.



## **Destination Grand: On the Horizon**

Last year, Henry Ford Health unveiled its plan to create a world-class academic medical center at the downtown campus. Destination Grand is slated to be completed by 2029, but the changing landscape will be seen soon. Because you are part of the Henry Ford Health family, you will have a front row seat to these changes and access to care and appointments at the campus.

This expansion includes:

- A new patient tower with private patient rooms that include the most modern technology for advanced care, comfort and convenience.
- The prestigious Shirley Ryan AbilityLab inpatient rehabilitation hospital. This was made possible by a \$375 million donation by the Gilbert Family Foundation, which is also funding the Nick Gilbert Neurofibromatosis Research Institute.
- A state-of-the-art medical research facility to advance the work of the Henry Ford + MSU Health Sciences partnership, reducing the time from discovery to bedside.
- A campus that will be connected with a series of tunnels, bridges and walkways. It will all be encompassed by ample green space.

"This expansion is so much more than simply adding hospital beds and a research facility," said **Steven Kalkanis, MD**, CEO of the Henry Ford Medical Group and of the Henry Ford Hospital campus in Detroit. "It is about creating a destination for patients to receive the absolute best and most comprehensive care options in the country and, in many cases, in the world. Our Henry Ford Health academic medical center will be on par with the elite centers in our country. The bottom line is that this campus will be a true destination for all."

You can follow the latest on Destination Grand on the Henry Ford Health website at [www.henryford.com/future-of-health](http://www.henryford.com/future-of-health).

# Nice to See You!

Virtual appointments with your primary care provider (PCP) can be wonderfully convenient, and they will remain part of the healthcare world for the foreseeable future. But it is important to remember the potential added value of seeing your PCP in person, such as:

- **In-person benefits.** Many health screenings or facets of a physical exam cannot be done virtually. These include bloodwork, accurate blood pressure readings (if you do not monitor at home), listening to your lungs, etc.
- **Change in health.** If you have a chronic condition or have had a change in your health over the past year, it is important to see your PCP in person.
- **Body language.** Your body movements and actions that may not be seen on screen can offer your provider information on your health.
- **Changing preferences.** Many PCPs are now expecting to see their patients in-person at least once a year, usually for their annual preventive physical. This may be a requirement in order to renew prescriptions or discuss any recommendations to see a specialist. Check with your PCP regarding their virtual practices.
- **Building a relationship.** Seeing your PCP in person once a year helps to add layers to that relationship, which can positively impact your health.

Always check with your provider regarding which visit is better for you and your health care needs.

# Health by the Numbers

Certain numbers can reveal things about you, like your age or your weight. While those don't always tell the full picture, they are guides to help evaluate your overall health. But there are two numbers that are very clear in their meaning – systolic and diastolic ... better known as blood pressure.

A healthy blood pressure reading is at or below 120/80 (systolic/diastolic). If your reading is above that, you are considered to have high blood pressure or, in some cases, hypertension. If your blood pressure is not under control, there are many serious health issues that can result, including damage to your heart and blood vessels, and an increased risk of stroke among other issues.

Some signs that you may have elevated blood pressure can include headaches, confusion, fatigue, vision problems, chest pain, difficulty breathing, buzzing in the ears, and an irregular heartbeat.

The best way to see if your blood pressure is within range is to have it evaluated by your provider. Home blood pressure cuffs are also helpful to monitor your numbers, but it is important to have the device calibrated by your provider's office once per year to ensure its accuracy. If it is determined that your blood pressure is elevated, there are many simple (though not always easy) steps to take.

- Exercise most days of the week and eat a healthy diet.
- As difficult as it is, quit smoking.
- Reduce stress through exercise, deep breathing, adding more fun to your life or eliminating stressors, if possible.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Know if you have sleep apnea; if you do, seek treatment.



If your efforts to naturally lower your blood pressure do not affect your numbers enough, your provider may discuss medication to help you. Make sure you understand the reasons why a medication is being prescribed, any side effects and how quickly you can expect to see a difference. This can help avoid a common pitfall, as described by Henry Ford Cardiologist **Shalini Modi, MD**.

"It is very important to remember that if you are prescribed medication, it is crucial that you take it as directed," said Dr. Modi. "If you have any hesitancy in taking the medication, please discuss this with your doctor at the appointment. They will be able to address your concerns right then so that you leave the appointment fully understanding the plan forward"



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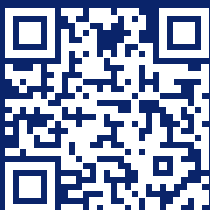
1 Ford Place  
Detroit, MI 48202

## Tips on Using Your GM ConnectedCare Plan

You made your healthcare selection. Now it's time to use it! Here are some tips to get the most out of the GM ConnectedCare plan:

- **Schedule your annual preventive physical.** You can call your provider's office or schedule it through MyChart. It may take time to get on the calendar, so inquire ahead of time.
- **Understanding Level 1 vs. Level 2.** While your plan allows you to see any provider you choose, only Henry Ford Health-affiliated providers are considered Level 1, which is the most affordable option. Level 2 providers and facilities carry a higher cost-sharing obligation.
- **Urgent Care.** Henry Ford-GoHealth urgent cares are covered at Level 1. With 16 of these facilities located throughout Southeast Michigan, you are sure to find one near you. You can even save your spot in line at a Henry Ford-GoHealth facility by going to [www.henryford.com/sameday](http://www.henryford.com/sameday). If you are outside Southeast Michigan and need care, you may still go to any urgent care facility, which will be covered at Level 1.
- **MyCare Advice Line.** When you need medical guidance right away you can call 833-262-1949.
- **Your Concierge Team.** These specialists can help with scheduling an appointment, finding a doctor, etc. Call them at 844-436-7637.

You can find more plan information at [www.henryford.com/gm](http://www.henryford.com/gm).



### Important Phone Numbers

Concierge Team: 844.436.7637

MyCare Advice Line: 833.262.1949