

Do you need a mental health checkup?

Source: [Manulife](#)

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Here's how you can get an at-home, DIY mental health checkup.

Chances are, you're no stranger to the concept of preventive medicine. You've had dental and eye exams. You may also see your family physician for a physical every one to three years.

But do you take the same approach when it comes to your mental health?

Sure, the benefits of preventive medicine for mental health may not be as obvious as, say, blood pressure screening for cardiovascular problems. But practising self-care and checking in on your mental state can help you live a healthier, happier life.

"Mental health is how you feel each day, how you get along with others, whether you're filled with fear and worry or excited to grasp every minute," says Tom Barwell, a Toronto psychotherapist. "It's there in the family, in how we form friendships, how we are at work, even how well we sleep. Mental health affects everything."

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic created a heightened level of stress and anxiety for many Canadians. If you feel like recent circumstances have left your mental wellbeing at risk, then you may want to consider penciling in a mental health "checkup" sooner rather than later. Here's how to start.

How do you know if you need a mental health checkup?

Everyone can benefit from thinking proactively about mental health. It can help you:

- address and relieve stress,
- build your self-confidence and self-esteem, and
- nurture healthy relationships.

A mental health check-in can also help you identify any early signs of mental illness and get help.

So what are some signs that say you need to make mental health a priority? Any sudden change in behavior can be a red flag, says Mio Yokoi, a therapist based in Toronto and the host of Life Stuff 101. You might feel like small anxieties quickly spiral out of control.

Other clues include physical symptoms like:

- sleeplessness,
- headaches or
- high blood pressure.

And you might find yourself leaning on external sources of comfort, like shopping, substances, or food, as a distraction.

Finally, life events - even positive ones, like landing a promotion - can affect your mental health, she explains. So checking in when you're going through a transition in life can help you come out happier and healthier.

How can you check in on your mental health?

Scheduling your mental health checkup is all about finding what's right for you. That could mean at-home solutions or outside support.

Practice mindfulness at home

Part of your mental health check up can involve a DIY approach. Ask yourself:

- ***How do I feel during the day?*** Are you frightened, worried, lonely, stressed?
- ***How do I respond to fears and anxiety?*** Negative feelings are normal - but does acknowledging them help, or trigger a spiral?
- ***How do I feel about my relationships?*** Your relationships have profound effects on your mental health, explains Barwell. Mindfulness can help you identify, appreciate and strengthen healthy ones.

Practicing mindfulness regularly - whether daily, weekly, or more often - will help you identify how you *really* feel. It can also identify patterns in negative thinking and help you identify sources of stress in your life. Mindfulness can help you get a sense of whether if you'd benefit from further support.

Mental health resources: Look for support when you need it

Scheduling time for an at-home check-in goes a long way toward assessing your mental health. “But some issues are difficult to work through alone,” says Barwell. “Even if it's natural to want to fix everything yourself.”

Instead, consider reaching out to a professional for support. Your mental health team could include a psychotherapist, psychologist or other mental health professional, and your family doctor. Many health-care professionals now offer online support or virtual- care services to help ensure social distancing and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Contact EFAP for more support

Canada:

- Call 1-877-847-4525
- Email support@resourcesforyourlife.com
- Visit <http://ca.resourcesforyourlife.com>
 - COMPANY CODE: BMWeCare
- Download the “ICONNECT YOU” app from the App Store or Google Play PASSCODE: 149301

United States:

- Call 1-800-466-8282
- Access Code 8282
- Visit www.AlternativesEAP.com
- Download the “Alternative EAP” app from the App Store or Google Play