

# b4stage4 **Get Informed**

When you or someone close to you starts to experience the early warning signs of mental illness, knowing what the risk factors and symptoms are will help to catch them early. Often times, family and friends are the first to support a person through these early stages. Like other health conditions, we need to address the symptoms early, identify the underlying illness, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health.

## RISK FACTORS

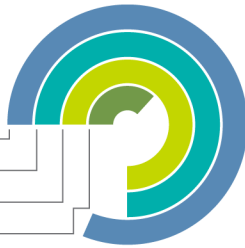
### Genes

**17-28%**

of risk for mental illnesses can be accounted for by variations in common genes.

Much stronger links were found in twin and family studies. Estimates for total heritability, or how much a disease is tied to genetics, are<sup>1</sup>:

- Schizophrenia 81%
- Bipolar disorder 75%
- ADHD 75%
- Depression 37%

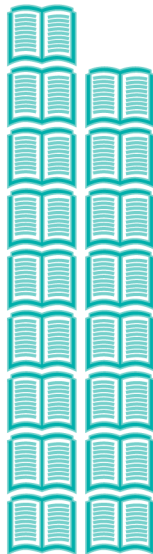


### Environment

People who are exposed to adverse childhood events including abuse, neglect, divorce, witnessing domestic violence and whose parents live with substance use problems, mental illnesses or are in jail are:<sup>3</sup>

**2.6x**  
more likely to have depression

**5x**  
more likely to have serious alcohol problems

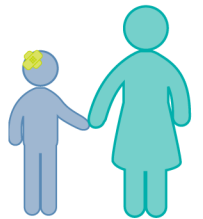


**17x**  
more likely to have learning or behavioural problems

**3x**  
more likely to have serious job problems

### Biology

In one study, head injury between the ages of 11-15 was the strongest predictor for development of schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder.<sup>2</sup>



Brain changes like building a “tolerance” or reward response to stress, or abnormalities in the prefrontal and frontal cortex, and irregularities in the function of the neurotransmitter glutamate are also risk factors for mental illness and substance use.<sup>4</sup>



### Substance Use

Substance use can increase chances of developing a mental illness

and having a mental illness can increase risk of using substances

People with any mental illness are:

**2.3x**  
as likely to develop nicotine dependence



**3x**  
more likely to develop alcohol dependence



**30x**  
more likely to develop dependence on other substances<sup>5</sup>



# EARLY WARNING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Having a combination of symptoms (not just one symptom) indicates that someone might be showing signs of a mental health condition. Be aware of these symptoms when they last longer than a few weeks:



Loss of interest in activities that are normally enjoyable, withdrawal from others, or disconnection



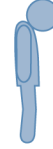
Changes in eating such as loss of appetite or overeating



Not being able to complete school or work tasks



Feeling overly worried



Feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or worthless



Changes in energy level and sleep patterns. Often someone will sleep during the day and be up at night



More irritable and angry than usual



Problems with concentration, memory, or ability to think clearly



Feeling like your brain is playing tricks on you. Hearing knocking or scratching sounds, or name being called



Unusual or distressing thoughts you can't seem to stop

## Signs and symptoms that require immediate attention:

- Thoughts or plans of killing or hurting one's self or another person
- Hearing voices or seeing things that no one else can hear or see
- Unexplainable changes in thinking, speech, or writing
- Being overly suspicious or fearful
- Serious drop in school or work performance
- Sudden personality changes that are bizarre or out of character

**See a doctor right away, call 911, or go to your local Emergency Room.**

**If you notice early warning signs, call the BC Mental Health support line at \*310-6789.**

*\*Do not add 604, 778 or 250 before the number*

[www.b4stage4.ca](http://www.b4stage4.ca)



[facebook.com/CMHABCDivision](https://www.facebook.com/CMHABCDivision)



@CMHABC  
#B4Stage4

# b4stage4



**Canadian Mental Health Association**  
**British Columbia**  
*Mental health for all*

## Sources

- <sup>1</sup> Cross-Disorder Group of the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium. Genetic relationship between five psychiatric disorders estimated from genome-wide SNPs. *Nature Genetics*, August 11, 2013. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2013/new-data-reveal-extent-of-genetic-overlap-between-major-mental-disorders.shtml>.
- <sup>2</sup> Orlovskaya, S., Pedersen, M. S., Benros, M. E., Mortensen, P. B., Agerbo, E., & Nordentoft, M. (2014). Head injury as risk factor for psychiatric disorders: a nationwide register-based follow-up study of 113,906 persons with head injury.
- <sup>3</sup> Burke, N. J., Hellman, J. L., Scott, B. G., Weems, C. F., & Carrion, V. G. (2011). The impact of adverse childhood experiences on an urban pediatric population. *Child abuse & neglect*, 35(6), 408-413. [http://acestudy.org/files/Review\\_of\\_ACE\\_Study\\_with\\_references\\_summary\\_table\\_2\\_.pdf](http://acestudy.org/files/Review_of_ACE_Study_with_references_summary_table_2_.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Brady, K. T., & Sinha, R. (2014). Co-occurring mental and substance use disorders: the neurobiological effects of chronic stress.
- <sup>5</sup> Swendsen, J., Conway, K. P., Degenhardt, L., Glantz, M., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Kessler, R. C. (2010). Mental disorders as risk factors for substance use, abuse and dependence: results from the 10-year follow-up of the National Comorbidity Survey. *Addiction*, 105(6), 1117-1128.
- <sup>6</sup> This infographic, and the b4stage4 philosophy and concept, is adapted from the work of Mental Health America, which has granted permission for their use. To learn more about Mental Health America, please go to [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)