



## Group Benefits

# What's on your mind?® – Talking to your doctor about mental health and addiction issues

There is no reason to be too embarrassed to talk to your doctor or health care provider about mental health or addiction concerns. Hearing about these issues is a routine part of every doctor's practice.

## Confidentiality

A doctor's office should feel like a safe place. Any medical discussions you have with your doctor are confidential and kept between you, your doctor and anyone else in your circle of confidential care (may include approved family members, health care professionals, your insurer, etc.). If you have concerns about privacy, ask your doctor who is in your circle of confidential care.

## Preparing for the talk with your doctor

- If you book your appointment in advance, you should ask for enough time to have a thorough discussion with your doctor so that you are not rushed.
- You may want to take along a trusted friend or family member for support. This friend or family member may be able to help you explain your situation. They may also be able to remember some of the information that your doctor tells you during the appointment.
- It may help to write down what you want to say or ask before you go to your appointment.

## Common questions to ask your doctor or health care provider

As with any medical issue, there are questions you will want to ask your doctor or health care provider to help ensure you understand your mental health condition or addiction and the available treatment options. Some common questions are listed below.

### ■ Do I need any tests to help figure out what's going on?

Sometimes your doctor will request laboratory tests to clarify the condition, or may refer you to another health provider.

### ■ Based on my symptoms, what can I expect?

Most mental health or addiction problems have typical emotional and physical symptoms that you may be experiencing. Providing your doctor with detailed descriptions of your symptoms will help them diagnose your condition and decide on a treatment plan. You may want to keep a log of your symptoms so you can share it with your doctor.

■ **What is the typical treatment for my condition?**

There are recommended treatments for most medical mental health conditions or addictions. Your doctor will explain these to you.

■ **Do I need medication or therapy?**

Sometimes, you will need one or both, depending on your condition and what has been shown to work most successfully.

■ **How long does this condition or these symptoms usually last? When might I feel better?**

Your provider can usually give an estimate of the likely duration.

■ **Do I need to see a specialist or go to a treatment centre or hospital?**

In some cases, your doctor or health care provider will recommend that you see a specialist or go to the hospital for treatment.

■ **Do I need time off from work? How long? When can I return to work and to regular or accommodated duties?**

As with any medical condition, mental health conditions can often be treated while someone continues to work, but sometimes accommodated duties or leave is required.

Mental health issues and addictions don't discriminate based upon age, gender, ethnicity, education or any other factor. They are not a sign of weakness, a punishment or a sign of a lack of intelligence. They are medical conditions that can affect anyone, including employees, employers, managers, CEOs, and even health care providers and doctors.

**Talking to your doctor or health care provider about symptoms you are experiencing may help you learn about your own health and the treatment options available.**

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GC2526E 10/2011

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