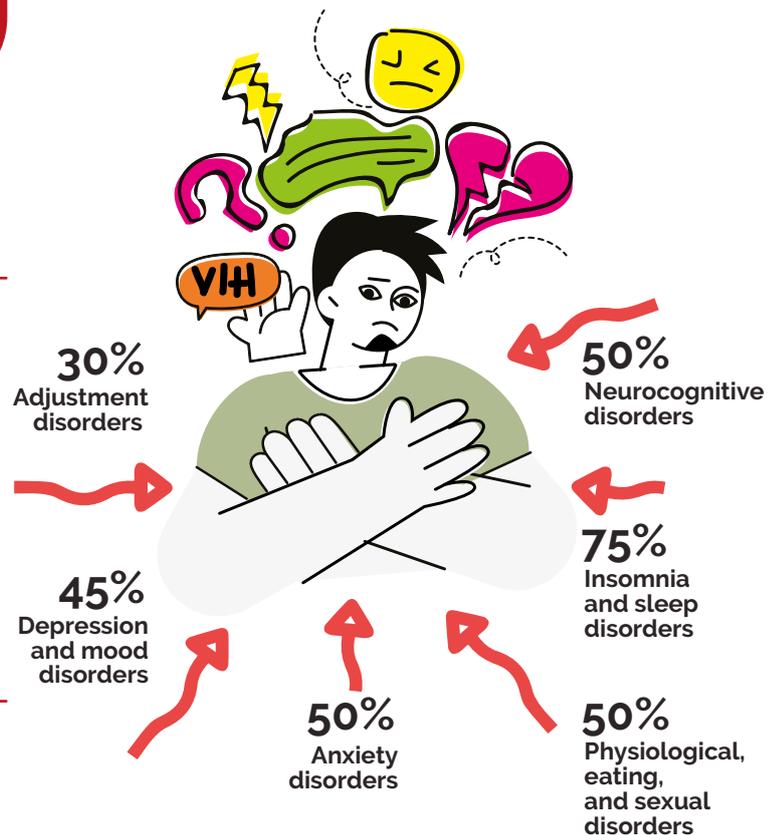


## Mental health and HIV

**Mental health problems are more common in people with HIV than in the population at large. These disorders can make you feel depressed, worried, or hopeless for a long time and affect your daily life. There are, however, many things you can do to prevent or to manage them.**



Being diagnosed and living with a serious illness such as HIV can have a major emotional impact. Some aspects of daily life become more complicated, and probably stressful, as a result of HIV. Mental health problems are, in fact, more common in people with HIV than in the population at large. Disorders such as insomnia, headaches, depression, and anxiety are the most common and have a detrimental impact on the well-being and quality of life of people with HIV.

The origins of these disorders are varied but they can be grouped into several causes. The most significant include:

- The emotional impact of suffering from an incurable disease. This can manifest in the form of adjustment disorders following diagnosis.
- The stigma associated with HIV.
- High drug and substance use.
- The effect of some antiretroviral drugs.

As mentioned, adjustment disorders after diagnosis affect how you feel, and what you think of yourself and of the world. They may also influence your actions and behaviour. All this can add to feelings of anxiety or depression.

It is therefore important to know that having negative feelings after being diagnosed with HIV is completely normal and understandable. You should not feel bad about the emotional reactions you are experiencing, most of which can be described as normal. Adjustment disorders occur within three months of a stressful event and do not last more than six months after it has ended.

Many people with HIV also find that their emotional well-being is affected from time to time, regardless of their process of adjustment to diagnosis. Identifying and accepting feelings is an important initial step in managing mental health.

## Advice on taking care of mental health



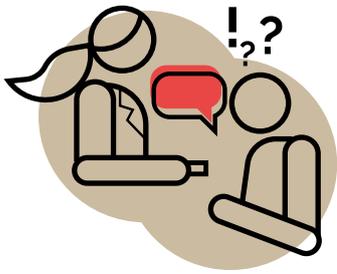
### Look after yourself

It is important to look after yourself as best you can. Try to make sure you eat and exercise regularly and get enough sleep.



### Keep in touch with people

Try to keep in regular contact with the people who matter to you. Talking about your experiences and feelings with a loved one or someone else with HIV can be very helpful.



### Ask for help

You need not deal with your problems alone. If you are finding your thoughts and feelings difficult to understand or handle, you may find it helpful to get professional support. Your hospital or health centre can provide guidance on available resources. *menos estresadas.*



### Reduce stress

Try to sort out everyday problems as soon as they arise. Do not allow them to increase your stress levels. Some people also find that complementary therapies, such as acupuncture or massage, can help them feel less stressed.



### Do activities you enjoy

It is important to do things you enjoy when you are going through a hard patch. This might involve making time for a hobby or trying something new.



### Watch your alcohol and drug use

Although using alcohol and/or drugs to cope with difficult feelings may offer short-term relief, long-term use is likely to make your feelings harder to manage.

**gt** grupo de trabajo sobre tratamientos del VIH  
ENTIDAD DECLARADA DE UTILIDAD PÚBLICA  
ONG DE DESARROLLO



¿TIENES DUDAS  
SOBRE EL TEMA?  
PREGÚNTANOS

Tel. 93 458 26 41

#### Disclaimer

The information on this sheet is not intended to replace a doctor's advice. Health decisions should always be taken after consulting health professionals. Medical information can quickly become outdated.

If you have any questions after reading this sheet, you should talk to your doctor or nurse, or call gTt-VIH on 93 458 26 41 to find out whether there have been any significant new developments.

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