



# April and May Health Observances

By Betsy Bransky

Each month in the United States there are many health observances celebrated (not just one, but many). So I picked a couple that I thought would have some impact on most people because they deal with issues that are wide spread in our country.

**April** is Alcohol Awareness Month. The following are Warning Signs of Alcohol Abuse. If you answer "yes" to any of the following questions, you may have a problem with alcohol:

- Do you drink alone when you feel angry or sad?
- Does your drinking ever make you late for work?
- Does your drinking worry your family?
- Do you ever drink after telling yourself you won't?
- Do you ever forget what you did while drinking?
- Do you get headaches or have a hangover after drinking?

If you suspect that you might have a drinking problem, or you know someone who abuses alcohol, please contact SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) at 1-800-729-6686 or find a screening site located near you. The National Clearing House is the source for free publications that will provide you with additional information about the hazards of drinking alcohol.

**May** is Mental Health Month. You can help yourself, your family, and friends by knowing some of the warning signs that may indicate problems that warrant help. These are warning signs that may indicate problems that warrant help.

*Undue, prolonged anxiety.* This is an anxiety out of proportion to any identifiable reason or cause. A state of constant tension and fear, fastening upon first one cause and then another is a signal that help is needed.

*Prolonged or severe depression.* The "blues" is a natural reaction to life's ups and downs. Depression, however, causes persistent changes in a person's mood, behavior, and feelings. Five or more of the following symptoms indicate a need for professional evaluation: feelings of sadness or irritability; loss of interest in sex and activities once enjoyed; changes

in weight or appetite; changes in sleeping patterns; feeling guilty, worthless, or hopeless; inability to concentrate, remember things, or make decisions; fatigue or loss of energy; restlessness or decreased activity noticed by others; and thoughts of suicide or death.

*Abrupt changes in mood or behavior.* Unlike changes a person adopts for self-improvement, these changes reflect serious alterations in a person's normal habits or way of thinking. The exceptionally frugal person, for example, who suddenly begins gambling away large sums of money may be experiencing emotional problems.

*Tension-caused physical problems.* Physical complaints that arise from stress range from headaches to nausea to muscle spasms. These symptoms, including pain, are very real; only a physician can determine their origin. Because medical tests may reveal an organic cause, any persistent physical ailment should be checked by a doctor.

*(From Mental Illness: Basic Facts, Mental Health Association in Milwaukee County)*

<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/seasonal/aprilalcohol/>  
<http://www.wimentalhealth.org/Learn/index.htm>

## Health Observances

F	A	M	I	L	Y	F	H	G	P	AWARENESS
C	W	H	O	G	A	L	Z	N	Z	CELEBRATE
O	A	Q	S	P	L	E	H	I	J	FAMILY
E	R	U	M	U	V	S	T	N	C	HEALTH
U	E	T	A	R	B	E	L	E	C	HELP
D	N	C	S	B	N	U	A	E	O	ISSUES
S	E	C	R	U	O	S	E	R	T	RESOURCES
G	S	L	Y	P	V	S	H	C	P	SCREENING
Z	S	N	G	I	S	I	A	S	B	SELF
P	B	S	J	L	H	D	E	J	X	SIGNS

