

Mental health is a vital aspect of a healthy life. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines mental health as “a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity.”² Mental illness, in all its forms, leads to a heavy societal and public health burden. Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses.

Major depression is the third leading cause of burden of any disease worldwide and ranks first place in high-income countries like the United States.³ The economic burden of depression in the United States was estimated to be \$83.1 billion in 2000.⁴ If the economic burden of depression in Utah is proportionate to Utah's percentage of the population, Utah's cost can be estimated to be at least \$760 million.⁵

Depression is associated with poor health behaviors and chronic illness. In a national study, adults with depression were found to be more likely to be smokers, obese, physically inactive, and binge drinkers compared to adults without depression.⁶ Data have shown that there is an increased prevalence of chronic illness in those with mental illness and that the presence of depression might contribute to the cause, affect the course, and complicate the treatment of chronic diseases.⁷ Depression also increases the risk of mortality from chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease⁸ and diabetes.⁹ Finally, depression can lead to suicide, which was the 11th leading cause of death in the United States in 2005.¹⁰

Depression can be classified in many ways. A more serious variety of depression is major depression. According to national data from 2005, approximately 16.6% of people in the United States have ever been diagnosed with major depression,¹¹ and 6.7% of people have suffered from major depression in the past year.¹² In an effort to calculate the percentage of Utah's population that suffers from major depression, the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) was added to Utah's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) in 2005–2007 (see *Appendix B: Methods and Procedures* for more information regarding these surveys). The PHQ-9 is a validated instrument used to help diagnose depression. For this report, the PHQ-9 was analyzed in order to estimate major depression. This report describes the results of these data, including the prevalence of major depression in Utah and the association between major depression and other health issues and behaviors.