OBESITY AND MENTAL ILLNESSES
FACT SHEET

• There is no simple association between obesity and depression and/or anxiety.

• Depression and anxiety are associated with unhealthy behaviors, such as poor diet, physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyle, tobacco use, and heavy alcohol consumption. Many of these unhealthy behaviors are linked to an increased potential for obesity.

• Obesity and depression share similar symptoms such as sleep problems, sedentary behavior and poorly controlled food intake; but for the most part are treated as separate health problems, often leading to poor treatment outcomes. Individuals with current depression or chronic depression are 60% more likely to be obese than those with no history of depression.

• Individuals with a chronic history of anxiety are 30% more likely to be obese than those who have not had a diagnosis of anxiety. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that obesity is associated with serious chronic illnesses such as coronary heart disease, stroke and osteoarthritis, making effective treatment for obesity all the more important.

• Obesity has been associated with an increased lifetime risk for major depression and panic disorder, particularly among females.

• Some research studies indicate that obesity in adolescence may lead to depression in adulthood, while other studies indicate that depression in adolescence leads to obesity in adulthood.