

MOOD DISORDERS

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Mood disorders are changes in a person's mood that are long lasting and severe.

Two mood disorders that require treatment are ***major depression*** and ***bipolar affective disorder***.

- ① A depressive disorder is a 'whole-body' illness, involving your body, mood, and thoughts.
- ① It affects the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things.
- ① A depressive disorder is not the same as a passing blue mood.
- ① It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely 'pull themselves together' and get better.
- ① Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Appropriate treatment; however, can help most people who suffer from depression.

Major depression

- A person is deeply unhappy and finds little pleasure in life
- Often accompanied by anxiety, sleep problems, changes in appetite and sometimes suicide attempts
- Can occur as one episode in a person's lifetime, but can be on-going or recurring

Symptoms of Depression:

- ◉ Persistent sad, anxious, 'empty' mood
- ◉ Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- ◉ Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- ◉ Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex
- ◉ Insomnia, early-morning awakening, oversleeping
- ◉ Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- ◉ Decreased energy, fatigue, being 'slowed down'
- ◉ Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- ◉ Restlessness, irritability
- ◉ Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- ◉ Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

- ◎ Most people with a depressive illness do not seek treatment, although the great majority - - even those with the severest disorders -- can be helped.
- ◎ Unfortunately, many people do not recognize that they have a treatable illness.

Who may be at risk for depression?

- ⦿ People who have a family member with depression
- ⦿ People who have experienced a stressful or traumatic life event
- ⦿ People who lack the social support of a spouse, friends, extended family
- ⦿ People who abuse drugs or alcohol
- ⦿ People who have chronic medical illnesses or persistent pain

- ⦿ During any 1-year period, 10% of the population suffers from a depressive illness.
- ⦿ Depressive illnesses often interfere with normal functioning and cause pain and suffering not only to those who have a disorder, but also to those who care about them.
- ⦿ Serious depression can destroy family life as well as the life of the ill person.

Bipolar affective disorder

- ⦿ A person experiences extreme mood changes far beyond a normal range
- ⦿ ***Manic stage***: confused and aggressive behaviour, unlimited energy and difficulty sleeping
- ⦿ ***Depressive stage***: extreme fatigue, sadness, sense of futility (knowing it won't work out despite all efforts), becomes withdrawn

- ⦿ Sometimes the mood switches are dramatic and rapid, but most often they are gradual.
- ⦿ When in the depressed cycle, a person can have any or all of the symptoms of depression.
- ⦿ When in the manic cycle, any or all manic symptoms may be experienced.

- ⦿ Not everyone who is depressed or manic experiences every symptom. Some people experience a few symptoms, some many. Also, severity of symptoms varies with individuals.

Symptoms of Mania:

- Inappropriate elation
- Inappropriate irritability
- Severe insomnia
- Grandiose notions
- Increased talking
- Disconnected and racing thoughts
- Increased sexual desire
- Markedly increased energy
- Poor judgment
- Inappropriate social behavior

Dysthymia

- ⦿ is marked by mild to moderate depressive symptoms that last at least two years.
- ⦿ People with this condition have fewer symptoms than those with major depression, but the symptoms last longer and develop more slowly.
- ⦿ On average, symptoms can last 16 years before there is a diagnosis.
- ⦿ Sometimes people with dysthymia also experience major depressive episodes.

Causes of depression

- Some types of depression run in families, indicating that a biological vulnerability can be inherited. This seems to be the case with bipolar.
- Not everybody with the genetic makeup that causes vulnerability to bipolar disorder has the illness.
- Apparently additional factors, possibly a stressful environment, are involved in its onset.

- ⦿ Major depression also seems to occur, generation after generation, in some families.
- ⦿ However, it can also occur in people who have no family history of depression.
- ⦿ Psychological makeup also plays a role in vulnerability to depression. People who have low self-esteem, who consistently view themselves and the world with pessimism, or who are readily overwhelmed by stress are prone to depression.
- ⦿ A serious loss, chronic illness, difficult relationship, financial problem, or any unwelcome change in life patterns can also trigger a depressive episode.
- ⦿ Very often, a combination of genetic, psychological, and environmental factors is involved in the onset of a depressive disorder.

If you think you have depression:

- Remember, your depression is not your fault and it can be effectively treated.
- Seek treatment. Don't let misconceptions about emotional illness or the discouragement of your depression stop you. Either on your own, or by asking a friend or family member, contact your family doctor, community mental health center, or local medical or psychiatric hospital for help.
- Consult experts (or at least reputable websites) like the Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba (www.mooddisordersmanitoba.ca) or Canadian Mental Health Association (www.cmha.ca)
- You can take some simple steps to help you deal with life on a day-to-day basis: break large tasks into small steps; set easily managed priorities; participate in light exercise and relatively undemanding social activities, such as attending a movie or visiting a friend. Simply being with others can be helpful.

Treatments

- ⦿ Medication
- ⦿ Psychotherapy
- ⦿ Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) (less common)
- ⦿ Light Therapy
- ⦿ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Remember!

- Depressed people are usually VERY reluctant to ask for help, and if they do know that they need help, they often lack the energy to seek it out.
- Watching for signs of depression in the people around you can SAVE LIVES!
- Learn to understand and accept mental illness. Stop the stigma. BE AN ALLY!