

FACT SHEET

Mood Disorders

While many people go through sad or elated moods from time to time, people with mood disorders suffer from severe or prolonged mood states that disrupt their daily functioning. Mood disorders are characterized by disturbances in mood; they include depression, bipolar

disorder, and certain disorders caused by a medical condition or substance use. Mood disorders tend to run in families. They are associated with imbalances in certain chemicals such as serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine that carry signals between brain cells. Major life

stressors like divorce, serious financial problems, or death of a family member, as well as certain medications, will often trigger symptoms of depression in susceptible people. Most mood disorders can be successfully managed if properly diagnosed and treated.

Depression

Depression is a common medical disorder that affects a person's thoughts, feelings, physical health and behaviours. Depression or symptoms of depression can become chronic or recurrent and impair a person's ability to take care of everyday responsibilities. Depression occurs in people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. Depression may lead to suicidal thoughts and actions.

Signs and Symptoms

- depressed mood
- overwhelming feelings of sadness
- disturbed thinking
- loss of interest in everyday activities
- low self-worth

- low energy
- feelings of guilt
- loss of appetite
- sleeping too much or too little
- physical symptoms (e.g. headaches)
- poor concentration

Self Care

Dealing with depression requires action. But taking action when you're depressed is challenging and may sometimes seem overwhelming.

- **Turn to trusted friends and family members.** Share what you're going through with the people you love and trust. Ask for the help and the support you need. These relationships can get you through this tough time.

- **Try to keep up with social activities even if you don't feel like it.** When you're depressed, it feels more comfortable to retreat, but being around other people will make you feel less depressed.
- **Join a support group for depression.** Being with others who are dealing with depression or bipolar disorder can help to reduce your sense of isolation. Group members can encourage one another, give and receive advice on how to cope, and share experiences.
- **Take care of yourself.** Try making time for things you enjoy, setting limits on what you're able to do, adopting healthy habits and scheduling fun activities into your day.



- **Manage stress.** Not only does stress prolong and worsen depression, but it can also trigger it. Identify your stressors, try to go easy on yourself and plan ahead to avoid stressful situations.
- **Try to eat healthy foods.** What you eat has a direct impact on the way you feel.
- **Know when to get additional help.** If you find your depression getting worse, seek professional help. Needing additional help doesn't mean you're weak. Sometimes the negative thinking in depression can make you feel overwhelmed, but depression can be treated, and you can feel better!
- **Make plans in advance for handling a relapse or crisis.** Discuss with a family member or friend what you would like done if you should become ill or relapse. Provide contact information and any emergency numbers.

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder includes both depression and mania or hypomania. Mania is an abnormal elevation in mood. The person may be excessively cheerful, have grandiose ideas, and may sleep less. He or she may talk nonstop, have increased energy levels and demonstrate poor judgement. Sometimes a person may appear very irritable or angry rather than cheerful. While an increase in

energy is not unusual, those who know the person well will notice a marked difference in behaviour. The person may seem to be in a "frenzy" and will often make poor, bizarre, or dangerous choices in his/her personal and professional lives. Hypomania is similar to mania but the symptoms (e.g. sleep disruptions, racing thoughts) are less severe, and have less serious impact on work and social activities.

Signs and Symptoms of Mania

- increased energy and restlessness
- extreme irritability
- euphoric mood
- decreased sleep
- trouble concentrating
- poor judgment
- unrealistic beliefs in one's abilities/powers
- spending sprees
- provocative or aggressive behavior
- denial
- unusual behaviour over a prolonged period
- rapid speech
- racing thoughts
- increased sex drive

How Families and Friends Can Help with Depression or Mood Disorders

Family members and friends can offer understanding, support and hope to help their loved ones cope with depression or other mood disorders.

- Educate yourself about depression and other mood disorders and how you can help.
- Let the person know that he or she is not alone, that you are there for them.
- Be a patient listener, rather than telling the person what to do.
- If your friend or family member has not yet sought treatment, let him or her know that help is available.
- If a person is receiving treatment, encourage him or her to continue to work with the doctor or other health provider.
- Ask what day-to-day help is needed (e.g. grocery shopping, housework).
- Avoid comments that minimize your loved one's illness (e.g. "You'll be fine." "Just snap out of it." or "Shouldn't you be better by now?").

Sources:

- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
- Health A to Z website
- Mood Disorder Association of Ontario
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- helpguide.org

For additional copies of this Fact Sheet, call the Ministry of Government Services at (306) 787-2056 or download a printable PDF at www.health.gov.sk.ca.