



Understanding Mood Disorders

Mood disorders are illnesses that affect the way you think and feel. The symptoms may be quite severe. In most cases, they won't go away on their own.

Most people have mood changes every now and then. One day you may feel cranky and the next day you feel great. But with a mood disorder, mood changes aren't so simple. These disorders can cause great emotional pain. And they can greatly disrupt your life. Mood disorders can be treated. Talk with your healthcare provider or a mental health provider. They can help.

What are mood disorders?

Mood disorders are illnesses that affect the way you think and feel. The symptoms may be quite severe. In most cases, they won't go away on their own. The most common mood disorders are depression and bipolar disorder.

- **Depression.** The main symptom of depression is a feeling of deep sadness. You may also feel hopeless. Or that life isn't worth living. At times you may think about suicide or death. Most people have some sadness in their lives. These feelings often lessen with time. But people with severe depression may not get better without treatment.
- **Bipolar disorder.** Bipolar disorder is sometimes called manic-depressive illness. That's because it causes extreme mood swings. At times you may feel intensely happy and full of energy. These episodes are often followed by great despair. In some cases, you may have both extremes at once. It's likely that you'll have phases when your mood shifts back and forth. You may have these mood swings just once in a while. Or they may happen a few times a year. Without treatment, they will likely keep happening for the rest of your life.

What causes mood disorders?

No one knows just what causes mood disorders. But, they do run in families. Changes in certain chemicals in your brain also may play a role. Major life changes, stress, trauma, certain physical illnesses, and medicines can each result in a mood disorder. These disorders affect both men and women. They also may strike people of every age, race, and income level.



Many online and community resources are available for people with mood disorders. Talk with your healthcare provider about counselors, family support services, and support groups in your area.

How daily issues affect your health

Many things in your daily life impact your health. This can include transportation, money problems, housing, access to food, and child care. If you can't get to medical appointments, you may not receive the care you need. When money is tight, it may be difficult to pay for medicines. And living far from a grocery store can make it hard to buy healthy food.

If you have concerns in any of these or other areas, talk with your healthcare team. They may know of local resources to assist you. Or they may have a staff person who can help.

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