

## Mood Disorders

Mood disorders refer to a category of mental health problems that include all types of depression and bipolar disorder. Mood disorders are sometimes called affective disorders. It affects a person's everyday emotional state. Nearly one in ten people aged 18 and older have mood disorders. These include

- Major depressive disorder
- Dysthymic disorder (a chronic, mild depression)
- Bipolar disorder (also called manic depression)

### What causes mood disorders?

What causes mood disorders is not well known. There are chemicals in the brain, called endorphins that are responsible for positive moods. Other chemicals in the brain, called neurotransmitters, regulate endorphins. Most likely, depression (and other mood disorders) is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. Life events (such as unwanted changes in life) may also contribute to a depressed mood.

Affective disorders aggregate in families and are considered to be multifactorially inherited. Multifactorial inheritance means that "many factors" are involved. The factors that produce the trait or condition are usually both genetic and environmental, involving a combination of genes from both parents. Often one gender (either males or females) is affected more frequently than the other in multifactorial traits. There appears to be a different threshold of expression, which means that one gender is more likely to show the problem, over the other gender.

### What are the symptoms of mood disorders?

Depending upon age and the type of mood disorder present, a person may exhibit different symptoms of depression. The following are the most common symptoms of a mood disorder. However, each individual may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- persistent feelings of sadness
- feeling hopeless or helpless
- having low self-esteem
- feeling inadequate
- excessive guilt
- feelings of wanting to die
- loss of interest in usual activities or activities once enjoyed
- difficulty with relationships
- sleep disturbances (i.e., insomnia, hypersomnia)
- changes in appetite or weight
- decreased energy
- difficulty concentrating
- a decrease in the ability to make decisions
- suicidal thoughts or attempts
- frequent physical complaints (i.e., headache, stomach ache, fatigue)
- running away or threats of running away from home
- hypersensitivity to failure or rejection
- irritability, hostility, aggression

## Treatment

Mood disorders can often be effectively treated. Treatment should always be based on a comprehensive evaluation. Treatment may include one, or more, of the following:

- antidepressant medications (especially when combined with psychotherapy has shown to be very effective in the treatment of depression)
- psychotherapy (most often cognitive-behavioral and/or interpersonal therapy that is focused on changing the individual's distorted views of themselves and the environment around them, working through difficult relationships, and identifying stressors in the environment and how to avoid them)
- family therapy

## Therapeutic Conversation

**Doctor:** Hello, Sarah, how may I help you?

**Sarah:** Oh doctor, I don't feel good. I think I can't bear this anymore.

**Doctor:** Tell me, why do you say that? Sounds like something is bothering you.

**Sarah:** I felt so low and insecure. I felt like my husband will forsake me, leave me for another woman. I would really kill myself if he would abandon me.

**Doctor:** Go ahead, I'm listening.

**Sarah:** I always feel sad these days. My concentration is a bit disturbed. And in the night I can't sleep especially if my hubby would be home late, I really got aggressive. I threw the flower vases and the plates on the floor. And I was shouting at him. But somehow, I really felt guilty about it.

**Doctor:** Really? You looked a bit stressed and had lost some pounds.

**Sarah:** Oh that's true. I must admit that I have lost my appetite.

**Doctor:** Aside from this, have you noticed any changes?

**Sarah:** There are actually lots. But one major thing is that I have difficulty understanding myself. That feeling when in a minute you are so happy, and in the next minute you feel so down.

**Doctor:** Was this before or after the fight incident with your husband?

**Sarah:** Even long before.

**Doctor:** How important is it to you to manage this behavior?

**Sarah:** It is very important. I want to save my relationship with my family especially to my husband. I know he doesn't want me to always complain and to feel hopeless out of nothing. But it's a struggle to conquer self.

**Doctor:** I understand how you are feeling right now. Just do it one day at a time.

**Sarah:** Thank you Doctor. Somehow I felt relieved.

**Doctor:** Welcome.