

Mood and Anxiety Disorders



Mood and anxiety disorders are medical conditions that change how you feel. These disorders can impact your moods, thoughts, and actions.

You can have more than one of these disorders at the same time. So it is important to learn how their symptoms and treatments are similar and how they are different.

Types

Depression

Why depression happens is not always clear. Depression may be linked to a problem with chemicals in the brain. Certain medicines, illnesses, or stressful life events may also lead to this condition.

Symptoms of depression may include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or guilty.
- Having trouble concentrating.

- Losing interest or not finding pleasure in activities that you have enjoyed before.
- Changes in sleep habits.

You also may have low energy, headaches, and stomachaches. Some people do not feel like eating. Some people eat a lot more. Depression may lead to thoughts of death or suicide.

Counseling and antidepressant medicines can help with depression. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of counseling. It helps you identify and change stressful thoughts.

Bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder is an illness that causes extreme changes in mood. Like depression, bipolar disorder may be linked to a problem with chemicals in the brain.

People with this disorder can shift from high energy to low depression. These extreme highs are called a "manic episode." Bipolar disorder also is known as manic-depressive disorder.

Your mood may return to normal after a manic episode, or you may start feeling depressed. These mood swings can make it hard to function.

Symptoms during a manic episode may include:

- Feeling very happy, excited, or self-confident.
- Feeling extreme high energy.
- Feeling restless, annoyed, impulsive, or on edge.
- Feeling like you need very little sleep.

Bipolar disorder is treated with counseling and medicines.

CBT is one form of counseling. Another type is interpersonal therapy, which focuses on relationships with others.

Medicines that are used to treat this condition include mood stabilizers, antipsychotics, sedatives, and sometimes antidepressants.

Anxiety disorders

Anxiety disorders cause fear and uncertainty. A stressful event, like public speaking or a first date, can cause mild anxiety that goes away. This is not an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders cause feelings that interfere with your life and can last 6 months or longer. These disorders can get worse if not treated.

The exact cause of anxiety disorders is not known. Like depression and bipolar disorder, research shows that anxiety may run in families. Medicines such as Sudafed and drugs like cocaine may cause anxiety. Caffeine also may be a cause.

Symptoms of anxiety may include:

- Constant worry.
- An upset stomach.
- Sleep problems.
- Headaches and muscle aches.
- Shakiness.
- Sweating.

Panic disorder is a type of anxiety disorder. It involves attacks of intense fear. This sudden fear is called a panic attack. Shortness of breath and a racing heartbeat are symptoms of a panic attack.

Anxiety disorders are treated with medicines and counseling. Your doctor may give you medicines such as antidepressants or sedatives. Counseling may involve exposure therapy or CBT to help you feel more comfortable with the things you are afraid of.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

SAD is a type of depression you have at the same time each year, usually during the fall or winter. Lack of exposure to sunlight is thought to cause the symptoms of SAD. SAD often goes away during the spring and summer.

Your symptoms may start and end around the same time each year. Symptoms include:

- Sadness and anxiety.
- Increased appetite and weight gain.
- Drowsiness.
- Problems concentrating.

Treatment for SAD may include antidepressant medicines, counseling, and light therapy. Light therapy uses an artificial light on your skin. This light helps make up for the lack of sunlight.

Resources

- **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance:** www.dbsalliance.org or 1-800-826-3632
- **National Institute of Mental Health:** www.nimh.nih.gov or 1-866-615-6464 toll-free
- **Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA):** www.adaa.org or (240) 485-1001