



What are mood disorders?

Mood disorders are common conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder (manic depression), and anxiety disorders that affect your mental health. Over 3 million Canadians are dealing with mood disorders at any given time but less than 1/3 of them seek treatment. Many people ignore their symptoms because they are afraid to talk about them or they don't know where and how to get help.

- ✧ 1 in 5 people will experience a mood disorder in their lifetime.
- ✧ Having a mood disorder is not a character flaw or a sign of weakness; it is a medical illness, just like heart disease or diabetes.
- ✧ Anyone can be affected by a mood disorder; mood disorders don't discriminate.
- ✧ Mood disorders affect people of every profession and every walk of life. A person with a mood disorder can be anything – and be good at it!

What causes a mood disorder?

Mood disorders are caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. There is no simple explanation as to why some people suffer from mood disorders while others do not. Genetics play a role in mood disorders; having a parent or relative with a mood disorder increases your chance of having one too.

Some other things that can trigger a mood disorder include:

- ✧ stressful life events (e.g., personal trauma or death of a loved one)
- ✧ certain medications
- ✧ substance abuse
- ✧ certain physical illnesses
- ✧ and sometimes, nothing at all

Regardless of the cause, it's important to understand that having a mood disorder is like having any other disease – once a proper diagnosis is made and the right medications and therapies are working, life will most probably start to come back together.

How could a mood disorder affect someone?

We all experience a wide range of moods which, for the most part, we feel in control of. With a mood disorder, this sense of control is lost, and that can be very distressing. There are two main characteristics of a mood disorder; mania and depression. If someone is experiencing mania (manic), they may show expansiveness, flight of ideas, decreased sleep, heightened self-esteem and grandiose ideas. If someone is experiencing depression (depressed), they can have a loss of energy and interest, feelings of guilt, difficulty in concentrating, loss of appetite and/or thoughts of death or suicide.

Having a mood disorder can affect your ability to function at work and at home. It can affect how you react to other people and how you feel about yourself. Left untreated, mood disorders can even affect your physical health.

Treatment Options

Mood disorders are common and they are treatable. Most people who seek treatment get better and live stable, healthy and productive lives. The treatment options for mood disorders have improved significantly; there are new medications and therapies available for both youth and adults.

Treatments for mood disorders may include medications (such as antidepressants or mood stabilizers) and/or psychotherapy (counseling). Often a combination of both is the most effective.