

Learning About Mood Disorders



What are mood disorders?

Mood disorders are medical problems that affect how you feel. They can impact your moods, thoughts, and actions. Mood disorders include:

- **Depression.** This causes you to feel sad or hopeless for much of the time.
- **Bipolar disorder.** This causes extreme mood changes from manic episodes of very high energy to extreme lows of depression.
- **Seasonal affective disorder (SAD).** This is a type of depression that affects you during the same season each year. Most often people experience SAD during the fall and winter months when days are shorter and there is less light.

What are the symptoms?

Depression

You may:

- Feel sad or hopeless nearly every day.
- Lose interest in or not get pleasure from most daily activities. You feel this way nearly every day.
- Have low energy, changes in your appetite, or changes in how well you sleep.
- Have trouble concentrating.
- Think about death and suicide.

Bipolar disorder

Symptoms depend on your mood swings. You may:

- Feel very happy, energetic, or on edge.
- Feel like you need very little sleep.
- Feel overly self-confident.
- Do impulsive things, such as spending a lot of money.
- Feel sad or hopeless.
- Have racing thoughts or trouble thinking and making decisions.
- Lose interest in things you have enjoyed in the past.
- Think about death and suicide.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

Symptoms come and go at about the same time each year. For most people with SAD, symptoms come during the winter when there is less daylight. You may:

- Feel sad, grumpy, moody, or anxious.
- Lose interest in your usual activities.
- Eat more and crave carbohydrates, such as bread and pasta.
- Gain weight.
- Sleep more and feel drowsy during the daytime.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

How are mood disorders treated?

Mood disorders can be treated with medicines or counseling, or a combination of both.

Medicines for depression and SAD may include antidepressants.

Medicines for bipolar disorder may include:

- Mood stabilizers.
- Antipsychotics.
- Benzodiazepines.

Counseling may involve cognitive behavioral therapy. It teaches you how to change the ways you think and behave. This can help you stop thinking bad thoughts about yourself and your life.

Light therapy is the main treatment for SAD. This therapy uses a special kind of lamp. You let the lamp shine on you at certain times, usually in the morning. This may help your symptoms during the months when there is less sunlight.

Healthy lifestyle

Healthy lifestyle changes may help you feel better.

- Be active often. You might try walking or strength training.
- Eat a healthy diet. Include fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains in your diet each day.
- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Try for 8 hours of sleep a night.
- Find ways to manage stress, such as relaxation exercises.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **Z126** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Mood Disorders**".

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