

## **Factsheet: Mood Disorders**

### **What Are Mood Disorders?**

Four basic forms of mood disorders are major depression, cyclothymia (a mild form of bipolar disorder), SAD (seasonal affective disorder) and mania (euphoric, hyperactive, over inflated ego, unrealistic optimism.)

### **How Common Are Mood Disorders?**

About 20% of the U.S. population reports at least one depressive symptom in a given month, and 12% report two or more in a year. A survey conducted in 1992 found rates of major depression reaching 5% in the previous 30 days, 17% for a lifetime. Bipolar disorder is less common, occurring at a rate of 1% in the general population, but some believe the diagnosis is often overlooked because manic elation is too rarely reported as an illness.

### **The Relationship Between Psychiatric Disorders and Mood Disorders**

Depression is a common feature of mental illness, whatever its nature and origin. A person with a history of any serious psychiatric disorder has almost as high a chance of developing major depression as someone who has had major depression itself in the past.

### **Alcohol, Substance Abuse and Depression**

Alcoholism and other forms of drug dependence are also related to depression. Dual diagnosis - substance abuse and another psychiatric disorder, usually a mood disorder - is an increasingly serious psychiatric concern. Whether drug abuse causes depression, depression leads to drug abuse, or both have a common cause, a vicious spiral ensues when addicts use the drugs to relieve symptoms the drugs have caused. Cocaine and other stimulants act on neurotransmitters in the brain's pleasure center, causing elation that is followed by depression as the effect subsides. Sometimes what appears to be major depression clears up after abstinence from alcohol or drugs. People with serious mood disorders also have twice the average rate of nicotine addiction, and many become depressed when they try to stop smoking.

### **Personality and Mood Disorders**

People are more easily demoralized by depression and slower to recover if they are withdrawn and unreasonably self-critical or irritable, impulsive, and hypersensitive to loss. Most people with major depression also show some signs of anxiety, and 15-30% have panic attacks. As a biological mechanism for coping with danger, anxiety creates a need for help or protection that may give way to despair if it is disappointed. Chronically anxious people may also medicate themselves with alcohol or drugs that can cause depression.

### **Depression and Physical Illness**

Depression is associated with physical illness as well. Some 25% of hospitalized medical patients have noticeable depressive symptoms and about 5% are suffering from major depression. Chronic medical conditions associated with depression include heart disease, cancer, vitamin deficiencies, diabetes, hepatitis, and malaria. Depression also is a common effect of neurological disorders, including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, multiple sclerosis, strokes, and brain tumors. Even moderate depressive symptoms are associated

with a higher than average rate of arteriosclerosis, heart attacks, and high blood pressure. Depression can mimic medical illness and any illness feels worse to someone suffering from depression.

### **Other Resources**

#### **National Mental Health Consumer Self-Help Clearinghouse**

Phone Number: (215) 751-1810

Toll Free Number: (800) 553-4539

Fax Number: (215) 636-6312

Email address: [info@mhselfhelp.org](mailto:info@mhselfhelp.org)

Website URL: <http://www.mhselfhelp.org/>

#### **Center for Mental Health Services National Mental Health Information Center**

PO Box 42557

Washington, DC 20015

Phone Number: (800) 789-2647

TTD Number: (866) 889-2647

Fax Number: (240)747-5470

Website URL: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/>

### **For More Information:**

For help finding treatment, support groups, medication information, help paying for your medications, your local Mental Health America affiliate, and other mental health-related services in your community, please click here to access our [Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#). **If you or someone you know is in crisis now**, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24 hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.

Source: <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/index.cfm?objectid=C7DF96B5-1372-4D20-C868380DE081DCAB>