



Mood Disorders

Mood is your state of mind or how you feel. As you well know, our mood may change from day to day or even hour to hour. Our mood may vary from happy to sad. Mood disorders are conditions where the mood is altered so one cannot function in their life.

The most common problem with altered mood is depression. But, the mood may be elevated to the point where one is impaired as well, we call this mania. Impaired moods then range from depression (extremely sad) to mania (extremely elevated). This month's tip will explain what these conditions are and how they present in children and adolescents.

Depression

Depression is extremely common and often overlooked by parents and by Pediatricians. Often it is transient and never treated. It is believed that by 18 years of age 20% of adolescents have had an episode of significant depression. Though we talk of depression and think in terms of sadness, often children and adolescents with depression do not display sadness. More commonly they have irritability. They seem easily annoyed, difficult to approach, and on edge.

Symptoms of Depression

- Change in sleep pattern, either too much sleep or not enough sleep
- Depressed or irritable mood.
- Feelings of worthlessness.
- Fatigue or lack of energy.
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate.
- Changes in motor activity, either an increase where they might have restless energy or little movement.
- Significant weight loss or gain without any attempt to diet
- A lack of pleasure in all or almost all activities.

A Major Depressive Episode occurs when 5 of the 9 symptoms listed above have been present every day for 2 weeks. These symptoms must impair the ability to function under normal situations.

A Dysthymic Disorder or Dysthymia occurs when there is a depressed or irritable mood more days than not, lasting at least 1 year. This condition is not as severe or disabling as a Major Depressive Episode. However, it is usually more chronic and often robs people of their happiness. Two or more of the above symptoms must be present.



Children become depressed for a variety of reasons. Genetic factors play an important role, but having a parent who is depressed is the single most important risk factor for a child becoming depressed. Depressed parents' behavior can be a factor in children's depression.

Mania

Mania, though not as common as depression, is important in that it becomes the hallmark for Bipolar Disorder. Manic is an euphoric mood, where an excessive level of energy drives the person into multiple activities. It is believed that 1 in 5 children or adolescents that have had an episode of depression will go on to have a manic episode at some time in their lifetime.

Symptoms of Mania

- Persistently elevated mood, grandiosity.
- Decreased need for sleep.
- More talkative.
- Thoughts seem to race through their mind.
- Easily distracted, but often over attentive to unimportant things.
- Increase in goal directed activity.
- Excessive involvement in pleasurable activities that have a high risk for painful consequences including sexual indiscretions.

Bipolar Disorder Type I is diagnosed when there has been one or more episodes of Mania (as defined as one week where 4 of the above symptoms have occurred to the extent to impair one's ability to function at home, work or school) and one or more episodes of Depression (as defined above).

Bipolar Disorder Type II is diagnosed when there has been an episode of Depression and Hypo Manic episodes in between the depressive episodes. A Hypo Manic episode is defined as a 4-day period of sustained elevated, expansive, or irritable mood that resembles a Maniac episode with respect to the symptoms listed above but to a lesser extent. For children and adolescents, it is Type II Bipolar that is more common. Often the hyperactivity of ADD can be seen as a Hypo Manic episode.

In Bipolar Disorders we see that the mood is not being regulated, and it cycles from being too high, to being too low. This can be quite impairing and difficult to treat. Children with ADD often have symptoms of depression and symptoms of mania so it becomes very difficult to sort out. Children cycle faster than adults, sometimes several times a day. They can pass from depressed irritable moods to hyperactive states where they cannot be slowed down. Often in a young child it is difficult to decide if it is Bipolar or just hyperactivity. Many times the child needs to be followed by their doctor over several months to know for sure if a mood disorder is present.

TREATMENT OF MOOD DISORDERS

- **EDUCATION**: The better we understand ourselves; the better we can cope and improve the course.
- **THERAPY**: Psychotherapy is necessary for anyone with a serious mood disorder.



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- **MEDICINES:** Medicines are used to improve depressed mood. These medicines are called antidepressants. Medicines are also used to prevent the cycling of the mood. These medications are called Mood Stabilizers. Sometimes medicines have to be used in combination to treat depression and prevent cycling of the mood.

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