



Mental Health America of Franklin County

538 E. Town Street, Suite D, Columbus, OH 43215

Telephone: (614) 221-1441 Fax: (614) 221-1491

info@mhafc.org

www.mhafc.org

Mood Disorders Fact Sheet

Mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder, are very common and are considered serious mental illnesses. In fact, depression affects more than 19 million Americans every year. More than 17 million Americans suffer from clinical depression (severe and milder depression and manic depression). In 1997, only 23% of adults diagnosed with depression received treatment. It is unfortunate that, even though depression is almost always treated successfully, fewer than half of those suffering from this illness seek treatment. Effective treatments include anti-depressants and mood stabilizing medications or other treatments and psychotherapy.

Clinical Depression

Clinical depression is characterized by a feeling of sadness for more than a few weeks and by having difficulty functioning in daily life. Depression appears to run in families, but researchers do not know the exact mechanism that triggers it. More than 80% of people with depression can be treated successfully with medication, psychotherapy or a combination of both.

Symptoms of Depression

A person suffering from depression may experience some or all of the following symptoms:

- A persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Sleeping too little or sleeping too much
- Reduced appetite and weight loss, or increased appetite and weight gain
- Loss of pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Restlessness or irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that don’t respond to treatment (headaches, chronic pain, constipation, etc.)
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- In children, rapid mood swings between silliness and irritability or rages. [Symptoms overlap with those of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder.]

What Causes Clinical Depression?

A single factor or multiple factors may contribute to clinical depression. Often, people become depressed for no apparent reason.

- **Biological** – People with depression typically have a dysregulation of certain brain chemicals, called “neurotransmitters.”
- **Cognitive** – People with negative thinking patterns and low self-esteem are more likely to develop clinical depression.
- **Gender** – Women experience clinical depression at a rate nearly twice that of men. Reasons may include hormonal changes or stress.

- **Co-occurrence** – Clinical depression is more likely to occur along with certain illnesses, such as heart disease, cancer, Parkinson’s disease, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, hormonal disorders, and substance abuse (alcohol and illicit drugs).
- **Medications** – Side effects of some medications can bring about depression.
- **Genetic** – A family history of clinical depression increases the risk for developing the illness.
- **Situational** – Difficult life events can contribute to clinical depression.

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder, also known as manic depression, is characterized by episodes of major depression and episodes of mania, with mood swings followed by periods of generally level behavior. Mania and depression may vary in duration and degree of intensity. Symptoms can emerge at any time from infants onward. The disorder tends to run in families and continues throughout life. Without treatment, people who have bipolar disorder often go through devastating life events, such as divorce, job loss, substance abuse and suicide. More than two million American adults, or about 1% of the U.S. population 18 or older, in a given year have bipolar disorder. Studies suggest that the illness may be at least as common in youth as in adults. Children with bipolar disorder are at risk for school failure, substance abuse and suicide.

What Are the Symptoms?

Mania is characterized as an expansive or irritable mood, inflated self-esteem, decreased need for sleep, increased energy, racing thoughts, feelings of invulnerability, heightened sex drive, poor judgement, and/or denial that anything is wrong.

Depression is characterized by feelings of hopelessness, guilt, worthlessness or melancholy; fatigue; loss of appetite for food or sex; sleep disturbances; thoughts of death or suicide; and suicide attempts. Substance abuse often co-occurs with depression and bipolar disorder.

Mental Health America of Franklin County is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; community and professional mental health education and a newsletter for first-time parents available in both English and Spanish. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board and United Way of Central Ohio. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at www.mhafc.org.