



Patient & Family Guide
2019

Welcome to the Mood Disorders Clinic



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What are mood disorders?

Mood disorders are a group of mental illnesses that affect how you feel and think about yourself, other people, and life in general.

Two specific types of mood disorders we often see in the clinic are bipolar disorder and major depressive disorder.

What is bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression), is a treatable brain disorder.

People who have it go through unusual mood changes. They go from feeling very happy, “up,” and active, to feeling very sad and hopeless, “down,” and inactive, and then back again. They often have normal moods in between. The “up” feeling is called mania. The “down” feeling is called depression.

A person’s mood swings can typically last days, weeks, or months. They also have extreme changes in thoughts, energy, and behaviour.

What are the symptoms of mania?

Symptoms of mania include feeling or acting like you:

- › have more energy than usual (physical and mental)
- › are hyperactive
- › are very happy
- › have a positive, broad outlook on life
- › can be very irritable
- › act aggressively
- › have little need for sleep (e.g., feeling rested after only 3 hours of sleep)
- › need to keep talking
- › are mixing up your speech or talking very fast
- › have too many thoughts at once
- › are distracted or not able to focus
- › have poor judgment and impulsiveness that leads to taking part in risky or dangerous activities (e.g., expensive shopping sprees, drug use, sexual promiscuity)
- › have self-esteem that is very high or over the top (e.g., acting like you are better than others)

In some cases people can have hallucinations (e.g., hearing or seeing something that isn't actually there) and delusions (e.g., believing something that isn't true even when confronted with proof).

What are the symptoms of depression?

Symptoms of depression include:

- › feeling sad or low most of the day
- › unexplained crying spells
- › eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
- › trouble sleeping or sleeping all the time
- › feeling irritable or angry
- › worrying or feeling anxious
- › feeling very tired or having a lack of energy
- › feeling aches and pains without knowing why
- › feeling guilty, worthless, or hopeless for no reason
- › poor concentration
- › trouble making decisions
- › losing interest and pleasure in most activities
- › changes in alcohol or drug use
- › thoughts of suicide or death that don't go away

What is major depressive disorder?

Depression is a treatable brain illness that can cause long term sadness, low energy, loss of interest in most activities, changes in sleep patterns, changes in appetite, and poor concentration. These symptoms make it very hard to carry on in daily life. If not treated, this can last for weeks to months. In bad cases, depression can lead to thoughts of hopelessness, helplessness, and even suicide.

What causes mood disorders?

The causes of mood disorders aren't always clear. Changes in brain chemistry and nerve cells play a role. It runs in families. Often, a common response to specific medications will also run in families.

**What are your questions? Please ask.
We are here to help you.**

**In Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with
a registered nurse about your health care
questions 24/7.**

How are mood disorders treated?

Bipolar disorder is usually treated with mood stabilizing medications. There are many types of mood stabilizers and the medication that is best for you will depend on your symptoms, side effects, and family history.

Other medications are used for sleep, anxiety, and other symptoms. Specific medications are often needed for moderate (medium) or severe (very bad) depression. There are many medications that help with mood, sleep, and anxiety.

Education about the illness and certain psychotherapies (cognitive behavioral and interpersonal) are important parts of the treatment process. The team will explain these types of treatment to you.

In certain situations, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) may be needed for quick results. Talk therapy, education, peer support, and a healthy lifestyle also play a role in the treatment of mood disorders.

Each person is unique and because of this, treatment options vary.

Mood Disorders Clinic

The Mood Disorders Clinic provides consultations for individuals with severe mood disorders, such as possible bipolar disorder. This is a specialized service to help diagnose and treat severe mood disorders.

Multidisciplinary clinical team

Our team is multidisciplinary, which means that health care professionals with different backgrounds work together to provide the best care we can to you. Here are some of our team members and their main areas of work:

Doctors - psychiatric care is provided by a psychiatrist who completes a detailed assessment, and provides followup care, medication management, supportive therapy, and monitors symptoms.

Nurses - registered nurses work to provide supportive therapy, education, symptom management, risk assessment, annual reviews, and health/medical support.

Social Worker - a social worker provides education, psychosocial (social and individual) support, resource counselling, relapse prevention support, assessment, and helps with system navigation (such as health care, community services, employment, income, medication, etc.)

Psychologist - completes diagnostic assessments, determines whether psychological therapy may help, and provides cognitive behavioural therapy. They also provide consultation and supervision to other members of the team.

Clinical treatment and services

Working with referring clinicians, the clinic provides consultation, diagnosis, and:

- › ongoing clinical team outpatient support, as needed
- › medication support
- › counselling assistance
- › education to patients and families
- › cognitive behavioural therapy sessions
- › mood/relapse management
- › research opportunities

Clinic mission

Our goal is to help you with your symptoms and condition so you have fewer, shorter, and milder episodes, and improved quality of life.

Referral process

Referrals to the clinic must come from a doctor or a nurse practitioner (NP). Doctors or NP's can ask the clinic for a referral form or access it on the hospital's intranet.

Your first appointment

Your appointment will last about 60-90 minutes and will be with a member(s) of our psychiatry team. The team is made up of health care professionals such as: health care students, psychiatry medical residents, doctors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists.

We will talk about your mental health concern(s), past mental health history, and family mental health history. We may ask for more information from a close family member or friend, if needed, with your permission. All of these things help us to get a clear picture of your current mental health in order to give you the best diagnosis.

At the end of the appointment you may be asked to return for further assessment, return for followup care, and/or return to the doctor or NP who referred you with a detailed psychiatric assessment and clinical recommendations. This assessment will be sent directly to the referral source, as well as your family health care provider, after your appointment.

Followup care

Most patients will return to the referring source for ongoing care, with a detailed psychiatric assessment, including recommendations and treatment options. Some patients may be followed by a psychiatrist in the clinic for a specific amount of time, like 6 months or 1 year.

Research opportunities

Within the clinic you may have a chance to take part in research studies. Your involvement is your choice, and will not affect your care or treatment. You can ask the clinician about available research opportunities.

