



Patient & Family Guide
2024

Welcome to the Mood Disorders Clinic



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Welcome to the Mood Disorders Clinic

What are mood disorders?

- Mood disorders are a group of mental illnesses that can affect:
 - › Your mood
 - › Your behaviour
 - › Your energy
 - › Your sleep
 - › Your ability to focus
 - › Your eating habits
 - › How you think and feel about yourself, other people, and life in general
- 2 types of mood disorders that we often see in the Mood Disorders Clinic are:
 - › Bipolar disorder
 - › Major depressive disorder

What is bipolar disorder?

- Bipolar disorder is a treatable mood disorder. It is also called **manic depression**.

- People with bipolar disorder have unusual mood states. These can include:
 - › Feeling very happy and “up”, and being very active. This feeling is called **mania**.
 - › Feeling very sad and “down,” or hopeless, and not being active. This feeling is called **depression**.
- These moods can last days, weeks, or months.
- Often, people will have less intense moods in between mania or depression episodes.

What are the symptoms of mania?

- Symptoms of mania can include:
 - › Having more physical and mental energy than usual
 - › Feeling more happy and excited than usual
 - › A more positive outlook on life than usual
 - › More activity
 - › Being more talkative (like talking very fast, or feeling like you need to keep talking)
 - › Less need for sleep (for example, you may feel rested after only getting 3 hours of sleep)
 - › Feeling irritable
 - › Having too many thoughts at once
 - › Being distracted or having trouble focusing

- › Being more impulsive (acting or making choices without planning or thinking about the effects). This can cause you to do things that have high risks (like spending a lot of money, using drugs, or having higher-risk sex)
- › Very high or intense self-esteem (you may feel or act like you are better than other people)
- › You may act more aggressive. **This is rare.**
- In some cases of bipolar disorder, people may have:
 - › Hallucinations (hearing or seeing something that is not really there)
 - › Delusions (believing something that is not true. This can happen even if you have proof that the delusion is not true.)

What are the symptoms of depression?

- Symptoms of depression include:
 - › Feeling sad or low for most of the day
 - › Eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
 - › Feeling very tired, or having less energy
 - › Having unusual aches and pains without knowing why
 - › Sleeping too much or too little
 - › Feeling irritable or angry
 - › Worrying or feeling anxious

- › Feeling guilty, worthless, or hopeless
- › Trouble focusing
- › Trouble making decisions
- › Losing interest and pleasure in most activities
- › Thoughts of suicide or death

What is major depressive disorder?

- Major depressive disorder is a treatable mood disorder. It can cause symptoms of depression. These include:
 - › Sadness
 - › Low energy
 - › Losing interest in most activities
 - › Changes in sleep patterns
 - › Changes in eating habits
 - › Trouble focusing
- In some people, depression can lead to thoughts of hopelessness, helplessness, and even suicide.
- These symptoms can make daily life very hard. If they are not treated, these symptoms can last for weeks to months.

What causes mood disorders?

- The causes of mood disorders are not always clear. Some factors include:
 - › Changes in your brain chemistry and nerve cells
 - › If other people in your family have had mood disorders
 - › Your life experiences
- Mood disorders can be genetic. This means it can be passed down from one family member to another (like a parent to a child). Often, a common response to certain medications will also run in families.

How are mood disorders treated?

Medication

- Bipolar disorder is usually treated with mood-stabilizing medications. There are many types of mood stabilizers. The medication that is best for you will depend on:
 - › Possible side effects
 - › Your symptoms
 - › Your family medical history
- Specific medications are often needed to treat moderate or severe (very bad) depression.
- Other medications can be used to treat sleep problems, anxiety, and other symptoms. There are many medications that can help with these.

Education and treatment

- An important part of your treatment is learning about your mood disorder.
- Mood disorders are also treated with certain types of psychotherapy (like cognitive behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy). The Clinic team will explain these types of treatment to you.
- Sometimes, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) may be needed for quick results. ECT is a treatment that uses a small electrical current to stimulate the brain and cause a mild seizure (twitching of your toes and jaw muscle). This treatment is very safe. The Clinic team will explain the treatment to you. Doctors and nurses will watch you closely during the treatment.
- Talk therapy, peer support, and a healthy lifestyle also play a role in mood disorder treatment. Each person is unique. The best treatment can be different from person to person.

About the Mood Disorders Clinic

- The Mood Disorders Clinic offers consultations (meetings with a clinician) for people with severe mood disorders (like possible bipolar disorder). Consultations can help to diagnose and treat severe mood disorders.
- Our goal is to help you with your symptoms so that you have fewer, shorter, and milder episodes, and a better quality of life.

Referrals

- You must have a referral to the Mood Disorder Clinic from a primary health care provider (a doctor or a nurse practitioner).

Clinical treatment and services

- We work with your primary health care provider. We also provide:
 - › Ongoing team support if you are an outpatient, as needed
 - › Help with your medications
 - › Counselling assistance
 - › Teaching you about your disorder and how best to manage your symptoms
 - › Cognitive behavioural therapy sessions
 - › Help with managing your moods
 - › Help with managing any relapses
 - › Option to take part in research studies

Mood Disorder Clinic health care team

- Our team is multidisciplinary. This means that health care providers with different backgrounds work together to give you the best care we can. Some of our team members and their main areas of work are:

Psychiatrists

- Psychiatrists do a detailed assessment. They also give follow-up care, monitor your symptoms, help you manage your medication and provide support.

Psychologist

- Psychologists diagnose you by doing assessments. They decide whether psychological therapy (like cognitive behavioural therapy) may help you.

Registered Nurses (RNs)

- RNs can help you manage your symptoms. They teach you about your disorder, and help provide supportive therapy and risk assessment.

Social worker

- Social workers provide teaching, counselling, relapse prevention support, and assessment. They can also give referrals to community services and help you find employment, health care, and financial (money) resources.

Your first appointment

- Your first appointment with the Clinic will last about 60 to 90 minutes (1 hour to 1 ½ hours).
- You will meet with 1 or more member(s) of our psychiatry team. The team is made of health care providers like:
 - › Doctors
 - › Nurses
 - › Psychologists
 - › Social workers
 - › Psychiatry medical residents (psychiatry students who are finishing their training)
 - › Health care students
- We will talk with you about:
 - › Your mental health concerns
 - › Your mental health history
 - › Your family's mental health history
- If needed, we may ask for more information from a close family member or friend. **We will only do this with your permission.**
- All of these things help us understand your current mental health. This helps us give you the best diagnosis.

- At this appointment, we will write a full psychiatric assessment that has our recommendations for your treatment. We will send a copy of this assessment to each health care provider who referred you to the Clinic and/or your primary health care provider.
- At the end of the appointment, we may ask you to:
 - › make another appointment at the Clinic for more assessment or for follow-up care.
 - › make an appointment with the health care provider who referred you to talk about our assessment and recommendations.

Follow-up care

- Most people will go back to their referring health care provider with their psychiatric assessment, recommendations, and treatment options.
- For some people, a Clinic psychiatrist may follow your care for some time (like 6 months or 1 year).

Research studies

You may have a chance to take part in research studies through the Clinic. Whether or not you choose to take part is your choice. **Your choice will not affect your care or treatment.** If you would like to take part, ask a member of your health care team for more information.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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