

## The Fraternal Twins of Mood Disorders

# Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. It helps one deal with a tense situation. But, when it becomes an excessive irrational dread of everyday situations, it has become a disabling disorder.

### Who is Affected

Anxiety disorders affect approximately 12% of adults in a given year.

### Types of Anxiety Disorders

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** chronic anxiety, exaggerated worry and tension, even when there is little or nothing to provoke it

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** recurrent, unwanted thoughts and/or repetitive behaviors

**Panic Disorder:** unexpected and repeated episodes of intense fear

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** persistent frightening thoughts and memories of a terrifying ordeal

**Social Phobia or Social Anxiety Disorder:** overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations

### Signs and Symptoms

All symptoms cluster around excessive irrational fear and dread, but each disorder has different symptoms.

**GAD:** worries accompanied by fatigue, headaches, muscle tension or other physical symptoms

**OCD:** persistent, unwelcomed thoughts or images, or the urgent need to engage in certain rituals

**Panic Disorder:** feelings of terror that strike suddenly and repeatedly without warning; frequently accompanied by a pounding heart, sweatiness, weakness, faintness and dizziness

**PTSD:** emotional numbness, detachment, sleep problems and a tendency to be easily startled

**Social Phobia:** a persistent, intense and chronic fear of being watched and judged by others and being embarrassed or humiliated; often accompanied by blushing, profuse sweating and other physical symptoms

### Treatment

Anxiety disorders are generally treated with a combination of medication and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) with effective results. Many people with anxiety disorders also benefit from support groups, family counseling and educational resources.

# Depression

Depression is a serious medical illness. It's more than just feeling "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. It's feeling down, low and hopeless for weeks at a time.

### Who is Affected

Depression is a common condition that affects about 8% of adults every year.

### Types of Depression

**Major Depressive Disorder or Major Depression:** a combination of symptoms that interfere with one's ability to work, sleep, study, eat and enjoy once-pleasurable activities

**Dysthymic Disorder, or Dysthymia:** long-term (two years or longer), but less severe symptoms that may not disable a person, but can prevent one from functioning normally or feeling well

Some forms of depressive disorders exhibit slightly different characteristics than those described above. They include:

**Psychotic Depression:** when a severe depressive illness is accompanied by some form of psychosis, such as a break with reality, hallucinations and delusions.

**Postpartum Depression:** diagnosed if a new mother develops a major depressive episode within one month after delivery

**Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** the onset of a depressive illness during winter when there is less natural sunlight; the depression generally lifts during spring and summer.

**Bipolar Disorder (also called Manic-Depressive):** cycling mood changes from extreme highs (mania) to extreme lows (depression)

### Signs and Symptoms

#### Emotional

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and/or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in once-pleasurable hobbies or activities, including sex

#### Physical

- Chest pain
- Digestive problems
- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Headaches
- Pain (back, joint and/or muscle)
- Weight loss or gain

### Treatment

Depression is the most treatable of mental illnesses. Most people who suffer from depression are helped by their treatment plans, which usually include medication and/or psychological counseling. Support from trusted family members, friends and self-help groups are also key to recovery.

## The Difference Between Depression and Grief

### Grief

When a person experiences a loss of someone or something that is meaningful to them, it is absolutely normal, and expected, that the person will develop grief around their loss. Grief is a natural human reaction and most people will go through this process multiple times throughout their lives.

#### Causes of Grief

- Death
- Career Loss
- Amputation
- Loss of Appearance
- Death of a Pet
- Loss of Health
- Bankruptcy
- Disability
- Divorce
- Terminal Illness
- Relationship Loss
- Vision/Hearing Loss
- Loss of Independence
- Loss of Job
- Major Move
- Shattered Dreams

#### Similar Symptoms

Grief and depression have several symptoms in common including sadness, insomnia, poor appetite and weight loss. It can be confusing for both the person experiencing these symptoms and those individuals in the person's personal and professional support system to differentiate between the two. The main area to observe when differentiating between grief and depression is duration and intensity.

#### The Difference

Grief softens over time.  
Clinical depression does not.

#### Signs of Grief

- Emotions are like a roller coaster. Can have good days and then bad days. Oscillates
- Tends to be more "trigger-related", e.g. a birthday or anniversary
- Can take care of oneself, social function returns, self-esteem intact
- Bad memories coincide with good memories

#### Treatment

The grief process varies in intensity and duration from person to person. There are no hard and fast rules around the experience of grief. It's important to find a support group or reach out to family and friends to help you through the grieving process.

### Depression

If you don't allow yourself to grieve, you may get stuck in the grief process. When someone is stuck in their grief, they experience hopelessness and turn inward, which are common signs of depression.

We will all experience grief in our lifetime, and even experience it multiple times. In the senior population, though, grief occurs more frequently due to the amount of loss occurring during this stage in life.

#### Depression Clues in Seniors

Older adults who deny feeling sad or depressed may still have major depression. Signs may include:

- Unexplained or aggravated aches & pains
- Memory problems
- Isolation / withdrawal from normal activities
- Irritability
- Neglecting personal care (skipping meals, hygiene)
- Sleep problems (especially early morning awakening and multiple awakenings)
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness
- Persistent, uncharacteristic negative self-view
- Isolation
- Reduced energy and concentration
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Seeing/hearing things that are not there
- Slow speech and body movements
- Thoughts of suicide or a preoccupation with dying

#### Treatment

There are many resources available to individuals who are dealing with grief and/or depression. If you are concerned that you may be dealing with one or both of these issues or know someone who is, don't be afraid to approach these people or to reach out for help. There are many organizations that understand the nature of grief and depression. Aurora Behavioral Health System is one of those entities. Our 24/7 Patient Services Helpline can schedule a free, confidential assessment to help determine your needs and support you in making the appropriate program choice.

***Help is only a phone call away. Aurora is where healing starts and the road to recovery begins.***