Women and Mood Disorders: Depression and Bipolar

Depression

Women experience depression at roughly twice the rate of men. One in four women can expect to develop clinical depression during their lifetime. Good News - clinical depression is a treatable medical illness.

Why are women at increased risk for depression?

- Biological differences (hormonal changes and genetic factors) may contribute to depression
- Social reasons may also lead to higher rates of clinical depression among women. These factors include greater stresses from work and family responsibilities, the roles and expectations of women and increased rates of sexual abuse and poverty.

Facts every woman should know.

- Depression is the number one cause of disability in women.
- Depression occurs most frequently in women 25 to 44 years of age.
- Married women have higher rates of depression than unmarried women, with rates peaking during childbearing years.
- Only one out of three women experiencing clinical depression will seek help.
- Elderly women experience depression more often than elderly men.

Learn to recognize the symptoms of depression and get help.

No two people experience clinical depression in the same manner. Symptoms will vary in severity and duration among different people.

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Sleeping too little, too much and early morning awakening
- Changes in appetite and or weight
- Difficulty focusing, making decisions or fatigue
- Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless or thoughts of death or suicide

www.desogen.com/therapy/women

For more information, please visit www.gov.ns.ca/health
Everyone has ups and downs. Feeling happy, sad and angry is normal. Bipolar disorder, or manic–depressive illness, is a medical condition in which people have extreme mood swings. Their moods may have nothing to do with things going on in their lives. These swings do not only affect mood, they also affect how people think, behave and function.

Bipolar disorder is an episodic (that is, recurrent) disorder. It typically consists of three states:

1. a high state, called “mania”
2. a low state, called “depression”
3. a well state, during which many people feel normal and function well.

There is an equal number of women and men who get bipolar disorder, but it affects them in slightly different ways.

- If you are a woman, you may be likely to have more depressive episodes than men.
- Women are more likely to start with a depressive episode, men with a manic one.
- Bipolar disorder also seems to run in families. About two thirds of people with bipolar disorder have a close relative who also has the disorder, or who suffers from severe depression.

Research shows that women tend to experience more periods of depression than men. Women are more likely to have milder episodes of hypomania that alternate with depression.
Women are also at higher risk for rapid cycling, which means having four or more episodes in one year. Researchers believe varying levels of sex hormones and activity of the thyroid gland in the neck -- together with the tendency to be prescribed antidepressants -- may contribute to rapid cycling.

Women are almost three times more likely than men to have coexisting disorders. Two of the most common coexisting disorders for women with bipolar were alcoholism and anxiety disorder.

Pregnancy represents a period of increased risk for women with bipolar disorder. Moreover, the risk of psychosis increases from 10-20% in women with bipolar disorder during the post-partum period.


Symptoms of mania:

- Excessive elation and inflated self-esteem
- Irritability
- Grandiose ideas, delusional thoughts
- Talking overly fast or loud
- Reckless behaviour such as overspending, promiscuity, dangerous driving

For help or information, contact:

- Your local mental health clinic
- The Canadian Mental Health Association
- www.mooddisorderscanada.ca