

Facts About Psychiatric Illness

Depression

♦ Although all people feel sad or blue occasionally, a persistent low mood that interferes with the ability to function and appreciate things in life is referred to as depression. Depression is a psychiatric illness

Did you know:

- ♦ An estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages 18 and older — about one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder each year.
- ♦ Psychiatric illnesses are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and Canada for ages 15 through 44.
- ♦ Many people suffer from more than one mental disorder at a given time.
- ♦ With proper treatment, 90 percent of individuals diagnosed with a psychiatric illness can live productive lives.

characterized by feelings of profound sadness and lack of interest in enjoyable activities. It may cause a wide range of symptoms, both physical and emotional and it can last for weeks, months or years.

- ♦ Major depressive disorder affects approximately 14.8 million American adults or about 6.7 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year.

Symptoms

- ♦ Persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety or emptiness.
- ♦ Hopelessness.
- ♦ Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness.
- ♦ Loss of interest in hobbies and activities.
- ♦ Trouble sleeping, waking up too early or oversleeping.
- ♦ Thoughts of death or suicide with or without suicide attempts.

Treatment

Treatment usually includes medication, psychotherapy or a combination of the two.

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic depression, is characterized by extreme swings in mood, energy and ability to function. The mood changes of bipolar disorder are more dramatic than typical ups and downs that most people experience. They can hurt relationships and cause poor job or school performance.

Bipolar disorder affects approximately 5.7 million American adults, or about 2.6 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year.

Symptoms

- ♦ Dramatic mood swings, ranging from elated excitability to hopeless.
- ♦ Periods of normal mood in between ups and downs.
- ♦ Extreme changes in energy and behavior.

Facts About Psychiatric Illness *continued*

Periods of highs are called mania. Signs and symptoms of include:

- ◆ Persistent and inexplicable elevation in mood.
- ◆ Increased energy and effort toward goal-directed activities.
- ◆ Racing thoughts; jumping from one idea to another.
- ◆ Decreased need for sleep.
- ◆ Over-confidence or inflated self-esteem.
- ◆ Poor judgement.

Periods of lows are called depression. Signs and symptoms include:

- ◆ Prolonged sad, hopeless, or empty mood.
- ◆ Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness.
- ◆ Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed.
- ◆ Decreased energy or fatigue.
- ◆ Trouble concentrating, remembering, and/or making decisions.
- ◆ Restlessness or diminished movements.
- ◆ Thoughts of death or suicide with or without suicide attempts.

Treatment

Treatment for bipolar disorder can include medication, psychotherapy and in some cases, electroconvulsive therapy.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a chronic, severe, disabling brain disorder that interferes with the way a person thinks, speaks, expresses emotions and behaves. It is **NOT** characterized by a split or multiple personality. Schizophrenia often first appears in men in their late teens or early twenties. In contrast, women are generally affected in their twenties or early thirties.

Approximately 2.4 million American adults, or about 1.1 percent of the population age 18 and older in a given year, have schizophrenia.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually begin in adolescence or early adulthood. They often appear slowly and become more disturbing and bizarre over time.

- ◆ Hallucinations—Hearing voices or seeing things that are not there.
- ◆ Delusions—strong but false personal beliefs.
- ◆ Disorganized thinking.
- ◆ Disorganized speech; inability to speak in a way that makes sense.
- ◆ Catatonic behavior-slow movement, repeating rhythmic gestures.
- ◆ Emotional flatness-flat speech, lack of facial expression and general disinterest and withdrawal.

Treatment

While not curable, schizophrenia is highly treatable. Hospitalization may be required during acute episodes. Symptoms are usually controlled with antipsychotic medications.

Sources of information: The National Institute of Mental Health, NARSAD: The Mental Health Research Association and the American Psychiatric Association.