



FEELING MOODY?

What's Normal vs What's Not

Some people are more moody than other people. Normal mood actually varies from person to person. That's because we all have different “temperaments,” or combinations of personality traits that are biologically based. These are fairly stable over time.

Considerable research shows that people really differ in their basic temperament. There are some people who temperamentally are always in a “good” mood. And there are people who are temperamentally always in a “bad” mood. People who have a more negative temperament tend to have a higher risk for mood and anxiety disorders.

WHAT MAKES OUR MOOD?

It's not only temperament that affects how you feel each day. Daily habits that affect your ability to manage stress—like diet, exercise, sleep, or how much alcohol you drink—play an important role, too.

If you address those factors—have good diet, good exercise, good sleep-wake habits, regular activities, routines, and try to disconnect from work and other stressors—those do have beneficial effects on mood and keeping you healthy.

Other biological factors can affect your mood too, like hormones. Women may experience shifts in hormones during their menstrual cycles, pregnancy, and menopause that cause mood changes. Men can have decreases in testosterone as they age, which has been linked to depression.

Certain medical conditions, such as a vitamin deficiency, can make you feel “down” or lack energy. Mental health conditions like depression and bipolar disorder can also cause you to feel very sad and have low energy.



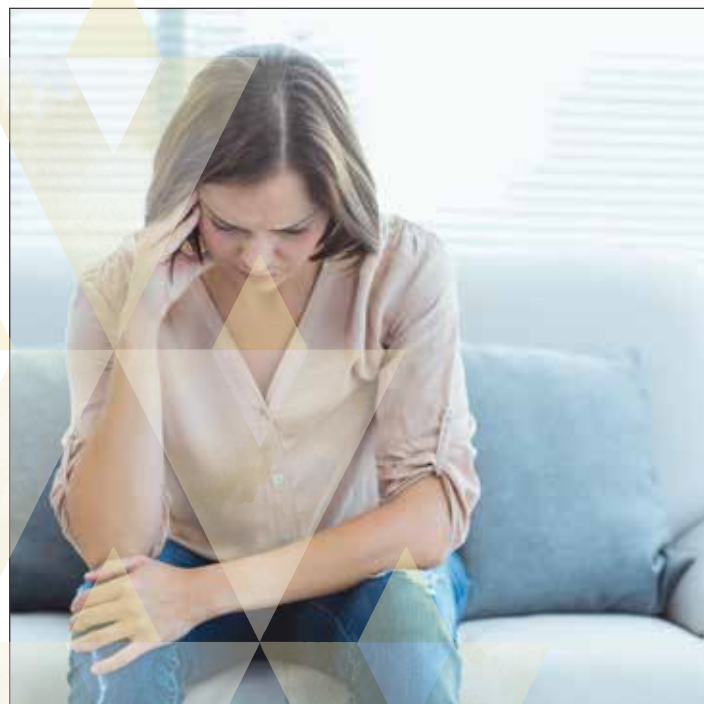
Other mental health conditions can cause mood issues as well—for example, anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, and personality disorders.

It's okay once in a while for people not to have a good mood. Moods that fluctuate occasionally are a normal thing. It's when it's combined with other symptoms—like significant distress and/or impairment of function or relationships—that it becomes an issue. People may not know when their mood has become a problem. Friends and family members should be open and honest with each other and let them know what they're seeing.

MANAGING YOUR MOOD

Mood is a normal part of life, and having emotions is a normal part of life. Sometimes you feel more negative than other times. That's not necessarily bad.

One common and effective strategy for both children and adults to use when feeling bad or down is called attention refocusing. Meaning that they stop paying attention to whatever is making them miserable or unhappy and they start putting their attention elsewhere.



For kids, this may mean finding a specific task to do when they're upset, like helping a parent with chores or finding someone to play with. For adults, it may mean having a conversation with a friend or going for a walk or to see a movie.

Experts often find that people with depression or other mental health conditions tend to turn to coping strategies that worsen their mood rather than lift it. For example, thinking about what's bothering them over and over again or avoiding or hiding their feelings. These strategies can make negative feelings stronger or last longer.

Charting your moods can help you figure out what's affecting how you feel too. There are even apps that help. If your mood is making it hard to cope with daily life, talk with your health care provider. If you're having suicidal thoughts, call your doctor immediately or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A MOOD DISORDER

If you've been feeling down or lacked energy for a while, talk with your doctor. Here are some things to look for:

- » Continuously feeling sad, anxious, "empty," or irritable
- » Feeling guilty, worthless, helpless, or hopeless
- » Losing interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- » Low energy or fatigue
- » Moving or talking more slowly
- » Feeling restless or having trouble sitting still
- » Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- » Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- » Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
- » Difficulty controlling worries
- » Aches or pains, headaches, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause