



ARC Young Adult Mental Health Information Series

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Cyclothymia

Cyclothymia is a milder form of bipolar disorder involving experiencing frequent swings between hypomanic and mild depressive episodes for a period of at least two years. These changes in mood can occur quickly and at any time. A person with cyclothymia may have brief periods of normal mood (euthymia), but these periods last fewer than eight weeks. Cyclothymia most often appears in adolescence or early adulthood and affects 0.4% to 1% of the population, equally affecting males and females.



Symptoms

The episode represents a distinct change in functioning with the changes in mood and behaviour being observable by others.

Hypomania Symptoms

- Increased energy and less need for sleep.
- Rapid speech and racing thoughts.
- Being easily distracted.
- Having an increased focus on goals, including work, school and social goals.
- Higher-than-normal level of self-esteem.
- A distinct period of abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood.
- Inflated self-esteem or grandiosity.
- Excessive involvement in activities that have a high potential for painful consequences, such as buying sprees, sexual indiscretions.

Depressive Symptoms

- Feelings of social isolation, low self-worth and guilt.
- Changes in eating patterns (eating more or less than usual).
- Difficulty falling asleep (insomnia) or trouble staying awake (hypersomnia).
- Fatigue or significant loss of energy.
- Decreased ability to concentrate.
- Persistent sadness.
- Fatigue or listlessness.
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.
- Persistent thoughts of death.





Diagnosis

It can be difficult for healthcare providers to diagnose cyclothymia, as it has many overlapping symptoms of other mental health conditions. To facilitate a diagnosis the physician will perform:

- A physical exam.
- A thorough medical history, which will include asking about your symptoms, lifetime history, experiences and family history.
- Medical tests, such as blood tests, to rule out other conditions that could be causing your symptoms, such as hyperthyroidism or substance use.
- A mental health evaluation. Your provider may perform the evaluation, or they may refer you to a mental health specialist, such as a psychologist or psychiatrist, to get one.

Providers diagnose cyclothymia when:

- For children and adolescents, symptoms must be present for one year.
- You haven't experienced more than two months of being symptom-free.
- Your symptoms aren't due to substance use or a medical condition.

Treatment

Treatment for cyclothymia usually involves psychotherapy and medication. Studies have shown that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) specifically works best to help treat cyclothymia. A psychiatrist may prescribe a mood stabilizer to help reduce the mood swings.

Additional behaviours that you may choose to adopt include

- avoiding alcohol or substance use
- practicing stress-reduction techniques
- aiming to maintain a regular pattern of sleep and exercise

Resources available

Aire Ouverte for youth 12-25 years of age. 5811 Taschereau Blvd., local 30, Brossard, QC J4Z 1A5
Drop-in services: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1:00-8:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. By appointment from Monday to Friday. telephone number: (450) 445-4474.

AMI-Quebec – www.amiquebec.org, (514) 486-1448

Friends for mental health – www.asmfmh.org, (514) 636-6885

Relief, www.relief.ca – (514) 529-3081

Éclusier du Haut-Richelieu – 144 Jacques-Cartier St. N., Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, QC J3B 6S6.
(450) 346-5252, www.eclusierhr.ca

Psychosocial support available at your local CLSC and through your primary care physician.

CLSC St-Hubert (450) 443-7400

CLSC Brossard (450) 445-4452

CLSC St-Jean-sur-Richelieu (450) 358-2572

CLSC Richelieu (450) 658-7561

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