

Atypical Depression

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Atypical depression may sometimes produce the same symptoms as a major depressive or dysthymic disorder, although it's considered a subtype of these disorders. Symptoms may include weight gain with increased appetite, drastic changes in lifestyle, too much sleep, weakness and fatigue and severe mood swings.

Those with atypical depression are often very sensitive to rejection or the perception that they were rejected. Those who are diagnosed with atypical depression often had symptoms of depression as a child or during the teen years.

Atypical depression is a very common type of depressive disorder and is different from the depression subtype, melancholic depression. Melancholic depression can be characterized involving symptoms of insomnia, overreaction to everything going around him, loss of appetite and inability to feel happy.

Atypical depression involves symptoms of drug or alcohol abuse, inability to cope, weight gain, sensitivity to rejection, anxiety and thoughts of suicide. So many forms of depression exist with similar symptoms that it's important you know the differences and how to cope with them.

It's important that you learn how to recognize your symptoms of depression and become better able to receive a correct diagnosis by being able to convey important information to your doctor.

Causes of Atypical Depression

Dysfunctional brain circuits which regulate the mood and help one region of the brain communicate with another could be the cause of atypical depression. These circuits contain nerve cells which transmit through neurotransmitters (brain chemicals).

Neurotransmitters can be serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine. Depression can occur when these neurotransmitters of the brain are lacking. Antidepressant medications are believed to increase the brain chemicals and help the brain circuits that control moods.

Although the exact cause of depression isn't known, certain risk factors are taken into consideration during the diagnosis phase and may include a genetic history of depression, death or other type of loss, continuing abuse (sexual, emotional or physical) and conflicts or emotional upheavals.

Life events may also trigger bouts of atypical depression. Losing a job, retirement, sudden social isolation, graduation or changing jobs, serious illnesses such as cardio, drug or alcohol abuse and HIV, stroke or cancer are often catalysts to depression disorders.

Sometimes, atypical depression begins during the teen years and may follow a chronic course through the person's lifetime. A person who experienced a traumatic childhood or one that included sexual or physical abuse may be at risk for atypical depression.

Those who have a history of bipolar disorder or abusing alcohol and/or drugs, personality traits such as co-dependency or low self-esteem may develop a depressive disorder.

Some types of medications (blood pressure and sleeping pills) may cause depression, but be sure to speak with your doctor before stopping or changing any medications. Your environment also has a lot to do with emotions and feelings of depression.

Stressors such as being isolated from friends and family may be a huge factor in developing a depressive disorder. A person with atypical depression may also have a lack of personal relationships or close friends.

As with other forms of depression, atypical depression is a serious disorder which should be addressed and treated as soon as possible before it causes problems with your health, emotional and behavioral problems.

Such problems, if not addressed can wreak havoc in every area of your life and cause other serious mental problems which can produce even worse symptoms. See your doctor to determine the cause and treatment path you should take if you suspect you have atypical depression.

Recognizing the Symptoms of Atypical Depression

Atypical depression symptoms are so much like symptoms for other types of depression that they have to be scrutinized carefully before the correct diagnosis is reached. One of the main differences in atypical depression and other types of depression is that a down mood will improve if something positive happens in the person's life.

Other types of melancholic depression show no difference in mood when positive changes occur. And, for a diagnosis of atypical depression to be reached, at least two particular symptoms must occur.

An increase in appetite, weight gain, sensitivity to rejection so that it causes problems in other areas, feels of being kept down or paralyzed and hypersomnia (getting too much sleep) are all symptoms of a person with atypical depression.

Since atypical depression is a subtype of major depression disorder, other symptoms should also be considered. Anxiety and drug or alcohol abuse may contribute to the side effects of atypical depression and suicidal thoughts may also occur.

If two or more of these symptoms are present, the healthcare provider will first examine the patient for a physical cause such as hypothyroidism. Low levels of the thyroid hormone may cause weight gain and lead to depression.

Atypical depression may also take on the symptoms of other types of major depressive disorders such as extreme sadness nearly every day, loss of pleasure, fatigue and mental acuity problems including inability to concentrate.

Recognizing any or all of the above symptoms in yourself is the first step in getting help to get you back to normal. The next step is to make an appointment with your healthcare provider so you can receive a diagnosis based on medical facts and begin a treatment program that can work for you.

Diagnosis and Treatments for Atypical Depression

Your doctor will perform a thorough physical exam before reaching a diagnosis of atypical depression to make sure there are no physical reasons for your symptoms. At some point during the physical exam, the doctor will ask questions about your overall health.

This will help to determine if your depression symptoms stem from a physical health problem. Lab tests will likely be in order. Blood analysis and hyperthyroidism tests can rule out faulty body functions.

You'll probably also go through a psychological evaluation so the doctor can gain insight into your symptoms and patterns of behavior. A mental health diagnosis will occur when the doctor determines that your depression symptoms meet the criteria for a certain mental health diagnosis.

If your diagnosis is atypical depression, the doctor will likely recommend talk therapy (psychotherapy) and certain medications designed to target atypical depression. If the symptoms are severe, the doctor may recommend seeing a specialist in the mental healthcare area.

Medications typically used for atypical depression usually include MAOIs (Monoamine oxidase inhibitors), SSRIs and tricyclic antidepressants. These prescription meds are the common choice for treating this form of depression.

More severe symptoms may require that you try several types or a combination of medications before you find the formula that works best for you. The doctor may also recommend psychotherapy – a very effective method for treating atypical depression.

During psychotherapy sessions, you'll learn various ways to cope with your situation such as identifying your unhealthy behavior and thoughts and changing them to more positive ones.

You may discuss past or present relationships or traumatic experiences you've had, learn how to set realistic goals and explore ways to alleviate the symptoms you're now experiencing.

Tips for Managing Atypical Depression

Atypical depression can make you feel as if you have lead weights attached to your legs. It's difficult to get out of bed and even more difficult to perform daily tasks. Even though it's a common form of depression, most doctors think that it's underdiagnosed.

Other than seeking and receiving a doctor's recommended methods of treatment, there may be a few more things you can do to ease the symptoms of atypical depression. One of the best ways to live a life free of symptoms on a daily basis is to avoid stress and conflicts.

Atypical depression can be draining and overwhelming – physically and mentally. Although people with this type of depression usually have brief times of cheerfulness if a positive event happens, they tend to overreact to negative times in their lives.

A comment from a boss, coworker or loved one can trigger feelings of rejection and a long bout of depressive symptoms. Feelings of rejection are one of the main symptoms of atypical depression and talk therapy can help you put them in perspective and realize that what you perceived wasn't true at all.

With atypical depression, your appetite and cravings may markedly increase – unlike other forms of depressive disorders where you lose all interest in food. Comfort foods are particularly craved by those with atypical depression and weight gain is sure to follow.

Do everything you can to decrease those cravings of high carb and calorie foods. Have a plan each day for what you're going to eat and

don't ever go to the supermarket when you're hungry. You'll end up buying and eating for the cravings rather than your health.

You'll probably want to sleep more than you ever have. It's a common symptom in atypical depression. Managing sleep habits by having a routine of when you go to bed and rise can help.

Meditation, non-cardiac exercises such as yoga stretching and relaxation techniques can help you get to sleep and stay asleep until it's time to wake up. Some people use techniques such as a sound machine next to the bed.

The machine can emulate sounds such as the ocean waves, soft, meditative music or chanting and other sounds that may help your sleep patterns. Only use your bed for sleeping – don't work or watch television in the place where you sleep.

Leadens paralysis is feelings of weights on your arms and legs that keep you tired and unable to physically move as you once did. If you can't exercise, at least try some stretching movements – and swimming is a great exercise that can remove those weights on your body and allow you to become buoyant and light.

Be sure to stick to the treatment plan you and your doctor agreed on. Don't skip psychotherapy appointments and never skip taking medications. Stopping will put you at risk for your symptoms to recur.

Education is empowerment. Learn all you can about your type of depression and ask your family and friends you trust for support and help when needed. If you notice warning signs such as suicidal thoughts and sudden changes in feelings, contact your doctor or psychotherapist immediately.

Talk to your doctor and/or psychotherapist to get other tips on how to handle the symptoms of atypical depression. There are also support groups, both online and likely within your community that offers help and guidance for depressive disorders.

Best Natural Remedies for Atypical Depression

Although it's best to follow your doctor's advice when it comes to remedies for atypical depression, there are a few natural methods you may want to talk to him or her about to see if any might be of help.

Cognitive therapy is said to be an effective treatment for atypical depression. It's a form of talk therapy or psychotherapy that's widely used by psychiatrists to treat this and other forms of depressive disorders.

Chromium is a mineral that regulates your blood sugar and may also affect the brain and how chemicals work as messengers to your body. Taking a chromium supplement may serve to relieve the carb cravings sometimes associated with atypical depression.

Vitamin B6 and Zinc are natural remedies which are vital to your body functioning. Just remember to avoid taking B6 during the evening hours as it may interfere with your sleep and cause vivid dreams.

Bright light therapy may also help those with atypical depression – and not only those who have SAD (seasonal affective disorder). Bright light therapy has an energizing effect and could help those who suffer from severe fatigue and sleepiness.

If you use bright light therapy, be sure to use it about 3 to 4 hours before you want to go to sleep. Try and use this form of therapy in the early hours of the day – especially just after you wake up.

One good thing about atypical depression is that it's very treatable. However, you should know that it's a very serious illness and the risks of further disability, suicide and drug or alcohol abuse are higher than some other types of depression.

With proper treatment and a strong effort to overcome these overwhelming symptoms of atypical depression, you can have a normal and enjoyable lifestyle and return to the activities in life that you most enjoy.



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