

Natural Help 4...

Mood Swings



What are Mood Swings?

Mood swings are characterized by a **drastic change in emotion** from one side of the spectrum to the other. If one moment someone is contentedly going about their daily tasks, and the next moment is suddenly upset, irritated or downright hostile, they may suffer from mood swings.

It is completely normal to experience the wide range of negative emotions like anger, irritability, tearfulness and sadness that affect us all from time to time. But **when out of control mood swings start to affect our ability to function properly** in jobs or personal relationships, they become an issue worth addressing.

Who Suffers from Mood Swings?

Studies have shown that **women experience mood swings twice as often as men**. This is not surprising as many mood swings are the result of fluctuating hormone levels as occurs in premenstrual syndrome, pregnancy or post-partum stages. There are a number of causes for mood swings (that affect both men and women) and when the underlying cause is addressed, mood swings usually dissipate.

Although mood swings are the main characteristic of bipolar disorder, the two should not be confused. Mood swings are a fairly normal part of life but become troublesome when they become excessive and frequent. The **violent mood swings** associated with bipolar disorder are much more severe and generally need professional treatment.

Diagnosing Mood Swings

Diagnosing mood swings involves a specialist taking account for your feelings throughout an average day. One way might be to chart your moods over the course of a week. If you experience erratic changes in your emotions or mood swings, **it can help to see what set your mood swings off**. This can often inform the method of treatment chosen to remedy them.

When Should You Worry about Mood Swings?

While the occasional mood swing can be expected and tolerated in daily life, **out of control mood swings** can become severe and debilitating. If you find that your mood swings are unpredictable, uncontrollable or consistently

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disproportionate to the situation, it is advisable to seek a professional assessment or start examining possible underlying causes.

Sometimes the solution is as simple as a change in diet, exercise or sleep patterns, but in others it may suggest a more serious problem. Even if moodiness is due to normal expected hormonal changes such as in menopause, there is no need to suffer through them, as there are treatment options available to help you regain your [emotional](#) stability and serenity.

What Causes Mood Swings?

[Violent mood swings](#) can be caused by a number of different conditions and complaints. Sometimes fluctuating moods are simply our reaction to daily aggravators and certain situations, but most of the time [mood swings](#) suggest that something is out of balance or physically wrong.

Causes and Common Triggers of Mood Swings

- **A chaotic or unbalanced life-style with too much stress.**
- **Lack of sleep or too much sleep** (the average individual needs approximately 7-8 hours of sleep each night.) This may be due to poor sleeping habits or a sleep disorder such as insomnia or sleep apnea.
- **Unhealthy diets lacking in the necessary vitamins and nutrients.** Eating too much sugar and wheat or not eating enough fresh fruit, fiber and vegetables may lead to feelings of moodiness. Our moods tend to fluctuate along with our blood sugar levels and so eating fast energy releasing foods generally leads to emotional highs and lows and feelings of fatigue.
- **Stopping Smoking (nicotine withdrawal).**
- **Anemia** either due to poor iron absorption or a lack of iron in the diet.
- **Chemical imbalance** in the brain including conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety.
- **Hormonal changes** such as during and after pregnancy, pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), post-partum depression and menopause are commonly associated with [mood swings](#). Teenagers can also suffer [mood swings](#) due to the hormonal changes related to puberty.
- **Alcohol abuse** (as well as mild alcohol consumption) and drug abuse.
- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).**
- **Hypoglycemia.**
- **Side effects of certain medications.**

Help for Mood Swings

Treatment for [mood swings](#) will **depend on the severity and the underlying cause** of the [mood swings](#). The first step of action should be to make a note of when the [mood swings](#) occur and after what activities.

If you keep a strict mood diary you will probably begin to notice a pattern such as [violent mood swings](#) after eating too much sugar, the day after a night out drinking or just before your menstrual cycle.

This will give you some clue as to what life-style changes are necessary and may also help your doctor make a more accurate diagnosis.



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Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

Treatment Options for Mood Swings

Lifestyle Changes

Assess your life-style and **attempt to restore balance** into all areas of your life. Ensure that you get enough exercise, sleep and a balanced diet. Address unhealthy habits such as excessive drinking, high sugar intake and find productive ways of dealing with stress, anger and anxiety.

Drug Treatments

If the underlying cause of your [mood swings](#) is a medical one, your doctor may prescribe certain medication to help balance your mood. The most commonly prescribed treatment for [mood swings](#) are anti-depressants such as Prozac, and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for menopausal women.

While psychiatric drug treatment may combat [mood swings](#), **most have unwanted side-effects and risks** such as insomnia, weight gain, decreased sex drive, headaches, and risk of suicide.

These all need to be thoroughly explored and considered before advancing on this option. There are also reports of withdrawal symptoms and worsened mood swings after discontinuing these drugs.

Recent controversies and **worrying risks of cancer related to hormone replacement therapy** also suggest that this should not be the first treatment option considered.

Psychological Treatments

There are many forms of psychotherapy that can help if **out of control mood swings** begin to interfere with daily functioning. **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** is especially useful in teaching people that they can control their reactions to situations and can help to provide alternative responses to common mood triggers.

It also helps by changing your way of thinking so that you approach situations with a positive and controlled outlook. As [mood swings](#) often leave you feeling that your emotions are out of control, sometimes the best approach is to learn to control the thoughts that lead to these emotions.

Natural Herbal and Homeopathic Remedies

There are a number of natural herbal and homeopathic remedies that have been shown to **optimize nervous system health and promote balanced mood and peacefulness**. Certain biochemic tissue salts such as Natrium sulphate, Kalium phosphate and Natrium phosphate, are commonly used to support the nervous system, lift mood and reduce anxiety.

Tissues salts make a useful non-prescription alternative that can be safely used by children, pregnant women and nursing mothers. Herbal ingredients such as St. John's Wort and Passiflora have also proven to be highly effective in lifting

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negative mood and reducing depression and anxiety.

There are also a number of natural remedies that may help treat the underlying cause of the [mood swings](#). Ask your local homeopath or reputable herbal supplier for advice.

Tips for Coping with Mood Swings

- **Try to work out any emotional tension that you may be holding on to.** So often we are totally unaware that something is actually worrying us until we sit down and confront the real reason that we keep blowing up over the little things. Try talking out some of these emotions with a trusted friend or licensed counselor.
- When you feel a [mood swing](#) coming on, **take a moment to pause.** Try breathing deeply and focus on something in the present such as the sound of your breathing or the feeling of the wind on your skin. By focusing your attention on something sensory and in the moment you take your mind away from negative thoughts and feelings and you can more easily let this negativity go.
- If you feel overpowered during a [mood swing](#) and tend to lose all rationality, sit down after the “storm has passed” and really think about what happened. Examine the event that changed your mood in relation to your reaction and come up with alternate and more positive ways of reacting to the same situation. Explore the thoughts that went through your mind and come up with more rational thoughts. The point of this exercise is not to spend hours beating yourself up over what you did and what you should have done – the point is to slowly change your habitual thoughts and reactions that lead to negative outcomes and come up with healthy alternatives!
- **Adapt your life-style to incorporate plenty of sleep, a healthy balanced diet, exercise and relaxation time.** Find ways of managing your stress levels and find healthier ways to vent your frustrations – such as writing, jogging or joining a kick-boxing class.
- **Eat regular meals** and try to eat slow energy releasing foods such as whole grain breads, beans & legumes, brown rice, and oats. Avoid fast-release carbohydrates or highly refined foods, excessive sugar, caffeine and alcohol.

The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.



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Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are 'unproven' and 'untested', the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market –giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called 'standardized' extracts of herbs and offering these as superior

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to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

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