



Epilepsy and Mood Disorders

Information Booklet
for People with Epilepsy



About the Epilepsy Foundation

The Epilepsy Foundation is the national voluntary agency solely dedicated to the welfare of the more than three million people with epilepsy in the U.S. and their families. The organization works to ensure that people with seizures are able to participate in all life experiences; and to prevent, control and cure epilepsy through services, education, advocacy and research. In addition to programs conducted at the national level,

people with epilepsy are also served by local Epilepsy Foundation affiliates across the country.

If you have any questions about epilepsy and seizure disorders, living with epilepsy, or helping a friend or family member who has epilepsy, please visit us on the Web at www.epilepsyfoundation.org or call **800 332-1000**

Our Web site has information about the disorder, offers opportunities to network with others touched

by epilepsy through our eCommunities forums and Web events. You can also subscribe to our bi-monthly magazine *EpilepsyUSA*. Each issue contains exciting developments for people affected by seizure disorders—new treatments and medicines, ground-breaking research, safety tips, personal stories, advice for parents and much, much more—all delivered right to your door.



This information is presented as a service of the Epilepsy Foundation. Medical knowledge changes rapidly and you should consult your medical practitioner for more recent or detailed information. This information is not medical advice. Do not change your medications as a result of this information without obtaining medical advice about your specific circumstance.

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Are you a person with epilepsy or a person who cares about someone with epilepsy? If so, this booklet is for you. Learning about depression and anxiety may be an important part of living the best life possible.

Moods, feelings of sadness, despair, worry or fear are part of being human and are natural reactions to life's challenges. Our ability to have emotional responses adds to the richness of our lives. It is common to feel strong emotions in response to a change in health or the loss of a job, a relationship or a loved one. Worry and anxiety are common in the face of significant life changes. For most people, these feelings are temporary and do not affect day-to-day functioning. With the passage of time, either on their own or with support of family and friends, they are able to regain their emotional footing.



What Are Mood Disorders?

Mood disorders are treatable medical conditions in which the emotional symptoms are intense, long lasting or recurrent and decrease the ability to function. Mood disorders may affect physical functions such as sleep, appetite or sexual desire and may start in response to a life stressor or may come for no apparent reason. People with mood disorders are not able to make themselves better through will power or by trying harder.

Major depression and dysthymia are the most common mood disorders experienced by people with epilepsy. Some people with epilepsy experience milder forms of depression that affect their quality of life and also respond to treatment.

Anxiety disorders are another group of common medical illnesses with psychological and behavioral symptoms. Often people with a mood disorder also have difficulty with anxiety and for improvement both issues must be addressed. Depression affects about 18 million people in the U.S. and anxiety disorders affect about 19 million. The GOOD NEWS is that there are effective treatments for mood and anxiety disorders that help people feel and function better.

What Is Depression?

Depression is a medical illness that affects the body, mood and thoughts. It promotes an unrealistic negative view of one's self and the world. Depression can decrease energy and rob the pleasure from usually enjoyable activities. There are several forms of depressive disorders. Major Depressive Disorder (also called Major Depression) and Dysthymia are the most common in general and in people with epilepsy. From studies in the general community, approximately 1/3 of individuals with epilepsy suffer from depression symptoms. Among individuals with severe uncontrolled seizures evaluated at specialty epilepsy centers, rates of depression symptoms may exceed 50%.

Types Of Depression

Major Depressive Disorder (Also Called Major Depression)

Major depression causes a combination of symptoms that interfere with a person's ability to function in life. People with depression may feel sad, hopeless, helpless and tired. They may feel overwhelmed with life. They may withdraw mentally and physically and have thoughts that life is not worth living. They may have pain. The number and severity of the symptoms may vary among individuals over time. Some people experience depression only once but more often it recurs.

Table 1

Major Depressive Disorder
(at least 5 symptoms for 2 weeks with at least one of the symptoms being either a depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure)
Decreased concentration, decision making
Depressed mood most of the day
Fatigue
Guilt or feelings of worthlessness
Lack of pleasure in life
Psychomotor agitation or retardation
Recurrent thoughts of suicide or death
Sleep difficulties
Weight change of more than 5% in
1 month, decreased appetite

**Adapted from Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2000.*

Dysthymia

Dysthymia is less severe than major depression. The symptoms are not disabling, but can prevent a person from feeling or functioning well. The symptoms are present more days than not for two years or more. Many people with this condition also experience an episode of major depression at some time in their life.

Bipolar Disorder (Also Called Manic-Depressive Illness)

Bipolar disorder is a less common form of depressive illness. It affects less than 1% of the adult population but the prevalence appears to be slightly higher in people with epilepsy. Bipolar disorder is characterized by mood changes that cycle from the lows of depression to severe highs called mania often with normal moods in between. The pattern of the cycles and the degree of disability can vary.

During the manic phase, a person may be overactive physically and mentally. His or her mind appears to race with a flood of ideas and speech is rapid and skips from one topic to another. The person may have trouble sleeping and may have an inflated sense of competence and importance. During the manic phase, impaired judgment and social behavior may lead to risky or embarrassing behavior.

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety disorders are medical illnesses that cause people to experience irrational excessive fear and dread. Physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, stomach or chest pain, or shortness of breath may accompany anxiety. Anxiety disorders are different from the mild temporary anxiety that most people experience in a stressful situation. Anxiety disorders last at least 6 months and can get worse without treatment. Anxiety disorders often occur with other mental and physical

illnesses including epilepsy. It is not uncommon for anxiety disorders to be accompanied by substance abuse and depression.

The types of anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety, panic, seasonal affective, obsessive compulsive and post traumatic stress disorder. Detailed information about the symptoms and effective treatments for anxiety disorders may be obtained from the organizations listed in the Resource section. Sometimes feelings of anxiety or fear are part of a seizure and this needs to be distinguished from an anxiety disorder.

Do Mood Disorders Occur in Children With Epilepsy?

Mood and anxiety disorders can also occur in children and may affect schoolwork and social functioning. The causes are similar to those in adults. Yet, depression and anxiety are often overlooked in children with epilepsy because children with depression may not have all the same symptoms as adults. For example, depressed children tend not to lose their appetite or complain of tiredness and/or inability to sleep, but often develop new physical complaints, such as headaches or stomach pain. They may not express feelings of sadness, hopelessness or helplessness as easily as adults. Behavioral problems are very common symptoms of depression in children. Depressed children may be irritable, easily tearful, and angry. Often, they start having difficulties with attention

and learning, and do poorly in school, spend less time with friends and family, become more isolative, and take less pleasure in their activities.

Children with anxiety are chronic worriers. They worry about routine, every day activities, and often seem very pessimistic. They frequently complain of headaches, stomachaches, and lethargy. They can be irritable and defiant when pushed into anxiety provoking activities. They also have difficulties separating from their parents and are fearful, particularly at night.

How Might Mood Problems Affect My Child Who Has Epilepsy?

Children who are depressed may develop negative changes in their daily behaviors, academic performance, and social growth. They may become angry, oppositional, disruptive, and may be difficult to control at home and at school. They may start taking anti-epilepsy medication irregularly. Adolescents may begin experimenting with alcohol, illegal drugs, and sex. They may experience a drop in their grades, terminate their involvement in sports and other previously enjoyable afterschool activities, and lose friends. Children may start feeling lonely, not loved, and develop thoughts of dying. Some of these children may attempt to hurt themselves or others. Excessive anxiety may interfere with concentration and lead to academic difficulties. Undue worry and fearfulness may also limit

social interactions and may cause a child or adolescent to become angry or irritable when forced to face anxiety provoking situations. If your child has any of these symptoms of mood or anxiety disorders, discuss them with your doctor who can make a diagnosis and determine whether treatment is needed.

What Are the Signs That An Adult or Child Needs Treatment?

Everyone has occasional symptoms of depression or anxiety. These feelings become a mood disorder when they last so long or are so intense that they interfere with a person's ability to function. It is important to share this information about yourself or your child with your doctor, who can help you assess whether they are severe enough to require treatment. Indications of a significant mood or anxiety disorder include problems at work or at school, spending less time with friends, doing fun things or interacting with others or increased use of alcohol and recreational drugs.

Relationship Of Epilepsy And Depressive And Anxiety Disorders

People with epilepsy have a higher rate of depression and anxiety disorders than the general population. Several factors have been proposed to explain this increased prevalence. The cause of the epilepsy such as a head injury, stroke or central nervous system

infection may also lead to depression and anxiety. Often the same parts of the brain such as the amygdala and hippocampus that are involved in the generation of seizures are also involved in the development of anxiety and depressive disorders. Epilepsy can involve disruption in the chemical messengers (neurotransmitters) in the brain and this can be a factor in the development of depression and anxiety. Epilepsy can present many stressors such as the loss of driving, difficulty at work and fear of having a seizure at an inopportune time or place. These significant ongoing sources of stress can contribute to the development of anxiety and mood problems. The treatment of epilepsy can have a positive, neutral or negative impact on mood and anxiety.

Mood Problems Before, During And After A Seizure

Before

Some people feel depressed, anxious or irritable in the hours or days before a seizure. The bad feelings get more intense as the seizure gets closer and then are usually gone after the seizure. At this time, there is no recommended treatment except to work for better seizure control.

During

A simple partial seizure is caused by abnormal electrical discharges in one part of the brain and occurs when the person is conscious. Some simple partial

seizures consist of an emotion because the discharges are occurring in a part of the brain that produces a feeling. One person may feel fear and another might feel a wave of depression or a thought of suicide. These might be recognized as seizures because the emotion comes suddenly out of the blue and the event is very similar every time it comes. Sometimes the simple partial seizure progresses to a complex partial seizure which solidifies the diagnosis of epilepsy. Education about the correct diagnosis can be reassuring to a person with simple partial seizures. The treatment would be to continue efforts to obtain better seizure control.

After

In addition to feeling wiped out and tired after a seizure some people experience depression and anxiety in the period after the seizure. These feelings usually go away in 24 hours but can last longer. The depressed feeling can be severe and in some people lead to thoughts of suicide. Suicidal thoughts after a seizure are more common in people who have a history of major depression or bipolar disorder. The first approach to this problem would be to work toward better seizure control. There has not been enough research to determine whether antidepressant medication would be helpful but it can be tried for severe cases.



Epilepsy Treatment And Mood Disorders

Anti-Epilepsy Drugs (AEDs)

People respond differently to medication.

A medication that is well tolerated by one person may present troubling side effects to another. All AEDs can trigger psychological symptoms in some people.

Some AEDs act as mood stabilizers and can have a positive effect on mood. These include valproic acid, lamotrigine, carbamazepine, and oxcarbazepine.

A negative change in mood can follow the discontinuation of an AED that is a mood stabilizer.

The person with epilepsy may not have been aware that the medication was treating mood issues as well as seizures. The appearance of mood symptoms when a person with epilepsy is switched to a new AED should not necessarily be attributed to the effect of the new AED.

Some AEDs can have negative effects and contribute to feelings of depression, anxiety, irritability and frustration. Phenobarbital and primidone are associated with depression. An AED is more likely to cause depression in a person who has a prior history or family history of depression, anxiety or alcoholism.

A person who is on an AED that is known to have negative effects on mood may find that he or she feels much better after a change in medication.

You need to work closely with your doctor to be sure that you are on the best AEDs for you. You count on your doctor's expertise but your doctor needs you to provide

the information needed to keep you on the best medications. An important issue is the timing of mood symptoms and changes in AEDs. You will be of great assistance if you present your doctor with a seizure calendar on which you record when you start and stop or change dosage of AEDs, when you miss a dose, seizure occurrence, and a log of your moods.

Surgery

Some people with epilepsy who have undergone surgery for seizure control develop depression in the first year after surgery. Depression is much more likely to

occur in a person who had a history of depression before surgery. Sometimes the depression is severe enough to cause thoughts of suicide. The depression should be treated with antidepressant medication and psychotherapy. The depression usually resolves in the first year but can go on longer in some people.

Recognizing Mood Disorders

How Might Mood Problems Affect Me?

It may be a sign of a mood disorder if your moods are long lasting, intense or are affecting your normal activities and enjoyment of life. You may have a mood

disorder if you have ongoing feelings of anxiety, depression or irritability, or have feelings of fear, panic, or pain that are not easily explained by your seizures or other medical causes. You may be aware of problems getting along with coworkers, family or friends. Your mood may change for a few days before or after a seizure. You may be irritable or depressed without realizing it. You may get angry without reason. You may have physical symptoms such as headache, chest or stomach pain. Ask people who know you well to help you by providing their view of your behavior and mood.

If you have mood symptoms that affect your usual activities, tell your doctor and consider seeing a mental health professional to be screened for mood disorders. Sometimes, AEDs and brain dysfunction can cause similar symptoms and mimic mood disorders. A health professional can help you sort out the cause of your feelings. The impact of mood disorders on your life is at least as important as your seizures and should receive the same attention to treatment. Do not hesitate to bring up this subject during an office visit.

How Can My Medical Practitioner Tell if I am Having Mood Problems?

Many medical practitioners are aware of the relationship of epilepsy and mood disorders and will address the issue during your visit. If they don't, be sure to bring up the topic yourself. It can help to begin



the visit with a short list of the most important issues you want to discuss during your time together. Your seizure/AED/mood calendar can be a helpful tool. You will need to decide whether your loved ones would be a help or a hindrance in your medical office visit. Your practitioner may have you fill out a short screening questionnaire to help assess mood issues. Your practitioner may suggest a change in AEDs or may suggest a treatment for mood disorder. You may be referred to a mental health specialist for further assessment and treatment.

Can Mood Problems Lead to Alcohol or Drugs?

Sometimes people resort to using drugs or alcohol in order to feel better. They may not even realize they are doing this. If you are drinking more alcohol than usual, are using recreational drugs or overusing prescription drugs, this may be a sign of a mood disorder. Ask your doctor to help you assess the situation. Some people benefit from treatment for substance abuse as well as treatment for mood disorders. Alcohol or drugs provide only temporary if any relief from mood problems. Alcohol and drugs may increase seizure frequency, cause mood problems or make mood problems worse.

Can Mood Disorders Result in Suicide?

Sometimes people with depression think about suicide. Feelings of hopelessness brought on by the

depression may make it seem that things will never get better. Suicide is more common in people with epilepsy than the general population.

If you are thinking about harming yourself or killing yourself or know someone who is:

**ALWAYS REACH OUT FOR HELP!
TELL SOMEONE WHO CAN GET HELP RIGHT AWAY**

1. Seek immediate medical or mental health attention.
2. Go to a emergency room of a hospital
3. Call 911
4. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) 24 hour toll free National Suicide Hotline

If you are concerned about another person, always take their statements about suicide seriously. Do not let them stay alone or have access to things like medications that they could use to hurt themselves.

Children and adolescents with epilepsy also experience thoughts of wanting to die or hurt themselves, particularly if they are having emotional, behavior, learning or social problems. Currently, there is no evidence that AEDs cause suicidal thoughts and behavior in children and adolescents. But children often find it difficult to share suicidal thoughts with their parents. So, it is important to have children with mood, anxiety, learning and social problems evaluated by a mental health professional early on in the treatment of their epilepsy. This information not only helps your child's doctor treat the seizures, it also determines if

your child also needs therapy and/or treatment with medications for depression and anxiety. Early treatment for these problems helps your child and you deal with all aspects of the illness.

How Can I Deal with Mood Problems When I Already Have Epilepsy?

If you have supportive family and friends, tell them how they can help you. It can also help to communicate with the many other people who are facing similar issues. There are many avenues for support from groups that meet in your community to online chat and support options. You can locate many of these resources for both epilepsy and mental health groups in the Resources Section.

It may seem unfair to have to manage more than one problem. Because seizures often occur in the same parts of the brain that affect the emotions, for many people mood problems are very much a part of having epilepsy. It is important to recognize mood problems because effective treatment is available that can improve your quality of life. Doctors and other health care providers are becoming more aware of the importance of mood problems to people with epilepsy and are prepared to help. Various kinds of treatment are available, including counseling, psychotherapy, and medication.

How Can I Help A Person Deal With A Mood Disorder?

The person with the mood disorder is not the only one affected. Family members and other concerned friends may struggle with their own feelings. Common and normal reactions are frustration, confusion, fear, anger or resentment. It can feel hopeless when you don't know how to help or when your assistance is rebuffed. It is important to remember that you did not cause the mood disorder and you cannot cure it but your support and understanding can be invaluable.

As a first step, learn about mood disorders: the types, symptoms, support resources and effective treatments. The organizations listed in the Resource Section can provide a wealth of information including support resources for family and friends.

Be a good listener which will require you to be accepting and nonjudgmental. Give loving support rather than advice. Let your loved one know that you care and will help. Ask directly what he or she needs.

Often people with mood disorders feel discouraged and lack energy and initiative to seek help. They may have a feeling that they should handle the problem without assistance and may not believe that treatment can help. They may not be aware that their feelings and behavior could be symptoms of a mood disorder. When this is the case, you may need to take an active role in helping them get assessment and treatment. You can offer to locate resources, speak to their doctor, and accompany them to

Table 2

Commonly Used Antidepressants			
SSRIs		Tricyclics	
Generic Name	Brand Name	Generic Name	Brand Name
Citalopram	Celexa	Amitriptyline	Elavil
Escitalopram	Lexapro	Desipramine	Norpramin
Fluoxetine	Prozac	Doxepin	Sinequan
Paroxetine	Paxil	Imipramine	Tofranil
Sertraline	Zoloft	Nortriptyline	Pamelor

*SSRIs=selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors

appointments. Your continued support may be helpful to assist them to follow through with treatment. You may find it helpful to seek a support group or counseling for yourself.

Treatment Of Mood Disorders

How Do I Know if I Need Treatment?

At times, everyone experiences some feelings of anxiety, irritability, or depression. However, if these symptoms last a long time, are severe, or interfere with your relationships or job, they probably require treatment. Start by telling the physician who treats your seizures, whether it is a family doctor, internist, or neurologist, about your feelings. Explain how often these symptoms occur, how they make you uncomfortable, and how long they last. If you can, bring in a calendar that tracks these symptoms, just like a seizure calendar.

Ask your doctor whether these symptoms might be related to your epilepsy and what to do about them. Together, you and your doctor can decide whether you need treatment for a mood disorder.

Isn't Treatment for the Seizures Enough?

Seizures are the most obvious part of having epilepsy, but they may not be the only part. If you have had a brain injury such as a head injury, meningitis, stroke, or brain tumor that is causing the seizures, it may be causing mood problems as well. A mood disorder, like depression, is likely decreasing your quality of life. Symptoms that occur with depression such as irritability and sadness may interfere with your social relationships, and trouble sleeping may even make your seizures worse. Depression can sometimes be very severe, leading to thoughts of death or suicide. It is

important to share your feelings with your health care provider because there are many effective treatments for mood disorders associated with epilepsy. Some antiepileptic drugs (AEDs) may help your mood, but their primary purpose is to control the seizures. For the treatment of a mood disorder, you may need an antidepressant.

Are There Treatments for Mood Disorders?

Many types of treatment are available for mood disorders. Psychotherapy and medication are the mainstays of treatment, which may be used separately or together. The goal is to completely eliminate your symptoms. The most common type of medication treatment is called an antidepressant, of which there are several kinds (Table 2). Antidepressant medication works to stabilize neurotransmitters in the brain. Your doctor is most likely to prescribe a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI). It is important to remember that medications for mood disorders may require dose adjustments and may take several weeks before becoming fully effective. Just like AEDs, sometimes more than one antidepressant may need to be tried before getting good results. For most individuals with epilepsy, depressive symptoms usually respond very well to low doses of medication.

Psychotherapy is also called talk therapy or counseling. Most psychotherapy used today for mood disorders is brief and focused on your current life. You

and the counselor will be active partners in work to assist you in making changes that will improve how you handle things in your life. Interpersonal Therapy and Cognitive Behavior Therapy are two types of psychotherapy that are effective in treating mood disorders. Interpersonal therapy deals with relationships in your life. Cognitive Behavior Therapy helps you change negative styles of thinking that are affecting your mood. You will learn skills to handle situations that are difficult for you.

Will I Be Taking Too Much Medication?

Most people with epilepsy take one or two AEDs to treat their seizures. Whenever a new drug is added, there is always the possibility of a drug interaction. For example, your AED level might go down, increasing the risk for seizures, or go up, increasing side effects. Your doctor should be aware of these possibilities. It is important to work together with your doctor to review these issues. Antidepressants are generally started at a low dose. Your doctor may ask you to get blood levels of your AEDs after starting the antidepressant to check for any interaction. Drug interactions are even less likely with some of the newer AEDs.

What About Side Effects?

All medications have side effects. If you start the medication at a small dose and increase it gradually,





you are less likely to have side effects. Your doctor will discuss with you which side effects to look out for, which will be different depending upon the medication you choose. You may need to try more than one medication to find one that agrees with you. When you start a new medication, keep a record along with your seizure calendar of any problems, like headache or nausea, so you can report them to your doctor. If you develop a rash, you should tell your doctor right away.

Can Antidepressants Make My Seizures Worse?

There are more than a dozen antidepressants available for the treatment of depression. Because you have epilepsy, your doctor will avoid prescribing an antidepressant likely to cause seizures. Doctors that frequently use antidepressants to treat their patients with epilepsy rarely see seizures occur as a side effect. If your seizures do increase, you will probably need to change to a different antidepressant.

Can My Child With Epilepsy Be Treated For Mood Problems?

Yes. Children with mood and/or anxiety problems and epilepsy must be evaluated and, if necessary, treated by a pediatric mental health specialist, such as a child psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker. These specialists will determine which of the following treatment approaches is best suited for your child:



individual counseling, group therapy, family interventions, or/and antidepressant medications (SSRIs). The type of treatment is based on the severity of your child's mood disorder; the presence of other emotional, learning, or behavioral problems; how well your child's seizures are controlled; how likely your child's mood or anxiety problems are side effects of AEDs; and if mood or anxiety disorders are in other family members.

The most effective treatment for mood disorders in children is the combination of SSRIs and behavioral therapy. Treatment may be started with therapy alone and antidepressant medication added, if your child continues to have significant mood symptoms. However, if mood problems are severe, SSRI should be started at the beginning of treatment.

SSRIs are the most commonly used and safest drugs to treat children with depression and anxiety. It is important for the child or adolescent to be monitored closely when a new medication is started for any negative changes in sleep, mood, emergence of new suicidal thinking, as well as changes in seizure frequency. Although the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued warning of a possibility of emergent suicidal thinking in children and adolescents treated with SSRIs, untreated or incompletely treated mood disorders in youth are associated with high risk of completed suicide and poor daily functioning.

How to Seek Help for Mood Disorders Related to Epilepsy

Who Else Can Help?

If your doctor is comfortable treating mood disorders, he may prescribe counseling, psychotherapy, medication or other treatment. If it is not clear exactly what type of mood disorder you have, or you need more specialized treatment, your doctor may refer you to a mental health specialist. These include psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, psychologists, social workers, and counselors.

What is a Psychiatrist?

A psychiatrist is a physician who specializes in treating people with mood disorders and other psychological problems. Psychiatrists offer various types of psychotherapy and can prescribe medications such as antidepressants or anti-anxiety drugs. Psychiatrists have an MD or DO degree, like your physician.

What is a Psychiatric Nurse?

Some nurses specialize in helping people with mood disorders and other mental health problems and have earned a Master's degree in psychiatric-mental health nursing. They work as Clinical Nurse Specialists or Nurse Practitioners and may provide education and psychotherapy, or act as case managers. In some states, psychiatric nurses work independently of physicians and can prescribe medications.

**What is a Psychologist?**

A psychologist is specially trained to evaluate and treat people with psychological problems. Some psychologists specialize in various forms of neuropsychological testing, while others offer different types of therapy. Psychologists do not prescribe medications, but may work together with a physician who can prescribe medications if needed. Psychologists usually have an advanced degree like a PhD, PsyD or EdD.

What is a Social Worker?

Social workers specialize in making sure patients have access to the services they need, such as transportation, home visits, and funding for medications. Social workers help families cope with illness, disability, inadequate housing, and unemployment. Social workers may also offer counseling. A college degree is the minimum requirement for a social worker, and many have a Masters degree (MSW) or Doctorates (DSW or PhD) in social work. Social workers are employed by hospitals, managed care organizations, local governments, and other agencies or are self-employed. Some social workers specialize in helping people with epilepsy and in treating mental health problems like mood disorders.

What is a Counselor?

Counselors have a variety of educational backgrounds designed to help them understand your medical and psychological problems and assist you in coping with them.

Specific types of counseling such as cognitive behavior therapy and interpersonal therapy may assist you in solving problems related to your epilepsy. Counselors typically have Master's degrees. Counselors work closely with other mental health professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers) to address mental health problems. Social workers may also act as counselors. A counselor may be able to suggest a local support group that consists of other people with similar problems, which you may find helpful.

How do I Choose a Mental Health Professional?

Your doctor is your best source of information for referral. It is quite likely that your doctor already has a working relationship with the mental health professionals in your area and has a good idea who is most likely to be able to help you. If you need more information, you can ask your local epilepsy support group or contact the various organizations listed under Treatment Resources.

Should I Tell My Family?

Mental health issues can be very sensitive. Just as some people feel that epilepsy has a stigma attached to it, some people are embarrassed to admit that they have problems with depression or anxiety. Unfortunately, this can prevent people with mood disorders from seeking help when effective treatment is available. Depending upon your family situation, you may wish to tell them about your mood disorder. It may be helpful for them to

receive education about your mood disorder. It may even be beneficial for them to participate in your treatment. Your mental health professional will help you decide how to address these issues with your family.

How Will I Pay For Mental Health Services?

Insurance coverage for mental health services is very variable. If you are not sure whether these services are covered, contact your insurance company. If you do not have insurance, you may have to pay for these services. Some communities offer free mental health services, or fees may be adjusted depending upon your ability to pay. A social worker can help you find affordable treatment for mood disorders.

How Can I Get Free Care?

Another way to get high quality care is to enroll in a clinical trial that is evaluating a new treatment for mood disorders. Each clinical trial has different criteria for participation. Once you enter the trial, typically you will have regular check-ups and receive medication or therapy without charge. In return, you are expected to follow the treatment instructions carefully and attend all required visits. For clinical trials sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health, go to www.nimh.nih.gov/studies/index.cfm or www.clinicaltrials.gov. Your doctor may also be able to recommend an appropriate clinical trial.

Where Can I Find Resources That Will Help Me Obtain The Treatment I Need?

Contact information is listed in the following section entitled Treatment Resources.

Treatment Resources

The following resources contain a wealth of information on mental health topics including specific conditions, treatments and how to locate help and support for individuals dealing with mental health concerns and the people who care for them.

National Institute Of Mental Health

A great source for comprehensive information on mental health topics such as depression and anxiety disorders including fact sheets and booklets that are available online and by mail (also en Español)
6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 8184, MSC 9663
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663
www.nimh.nih.gov

Medline Plus

A good source of authoritative and up to date medical information including mental health conditions from the world's largest medical library, the National Library of Medicine (also en Español)
www.medlineplus.gov

Professional Associations

(these websites have education and resources for the general public)

Academy of Cognitive Therapy

Information about cognitive therapy and finding a cognitive therapist

www.academyofct.org

American Academy Of Child And Adolescent Psychiatry

Provides information about childhood disorders, and how to obtain psychiatric evaluation and treatment. Topics include understanding your insurance mental health coverage, the types of mental health providers, and when and how to seek help

3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016-3007

www.aacap.org

American Psychological Association

Provides information on mental health topics and the assistance provided by psychologists, includes a tool to locate a psychologist in your area

750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242

www.apa.org

American Psychiatric Association

This informative site for the public; it includes a section on frequently asked questions about mental health problems and the assessment and treatment offered by psychiatrists including a tool to locate a psychiatrist in your area. www.healthyminds.org

Association For Behavioral And Cognitive Therapies

Provides a description of cognitive therapy (what it is, how it helps and what to expect during treatment) and includes a tool to find a therapist in your area

305 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10001

www.abct.org

National Association Of Cognitive Behavior Therapy

PO Box 2195
Weirton, WV 26062

www.nacbt.org

National Association Of Social Workers

A website for the general public that provides education about mental health topics and other individual and social issues such as suicide, stress reduction, care giving, lifespan planning, and how a social worker can be of assistance and how to locate one in your area.

www.helpstartshere.org



Organizations

Anxiety Disorders Association Of America

Provides information about anxiety disorders including the specific types of treatments that are effective, locating therapists and support groups and current research and efforts to increase public awareness

8730 Georgia Avenue #600
Silver Spring, MD 20910

www.adaa.org

Depression And Bipolar Support Alliance

Provides a range of educational, support and advocacy services for people living with depressive disorders and their loved ones including in person and online support groups and training for peer advocates

730 N. Franklin Street
Chicago, IL 60654-7225

www.dbsalliance.org

Freedom From Fear

Provides information on anxiety and depression and how to find help including a referral network (also en Espanol)

308 Seaview Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10305

www.freedomfromfear.org

Mental Health America

This organization provides education and advocacy and has local affiliates in some states. The website has information about mental health topics and offers assistance in locating treatment.

2000 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311

www.nmha.org

National Alliance On Mental Illness

This organization provides grass roots support, advocacy and self help for people with severe mental illness and their families and friends, has local affiliates and support groups

Colonial Place Three
2107 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201-3042

www.nami.org

Obsessive Compulsive Foundation

Information about the condition, including effective treatment options, finding a doctor, and support groups

PO Box 961029
Boston, MA 02196

www.ocfoundation.org

A website for children with anxiety and their parents

www.worrywisekids.org

A low cost interactive self help program on line that is not designed to substitute for mental health screening and treatment but to work in conjunction with treatment

www.myselfhelp.com

Suicide

American Association Of Suicidology

120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005
www.suicidology.org

American Foundation For Suicide Prevention

Provides information to professionals and the general public on suicide prevention including warning signs and risks
120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005
www.afsp.org

Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1 800 273-8255 (en Espanol 1 888 628-9454)

This website provides information about the suicide prevention phone lifeline that is available toll free from any phone in the U.S. 24 hours per day 7 days per week. In addition to talking to people who are in distress the phone counselors are available to speak to people who are concerned about another person or who want information about mental health resources.
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Epilepsy Resources

Epilepsy Foundation

This is the national organization for people with epilepsy and the website has numerous topics of interest including information from experts on mental health topics and a screening tool for depression.
8301 Professional Place
Landover, MD 20785
www.epilepsyfoundation.org

National Association Of Epilepsy Centers

This website provides information about specialized epilepsy care and the location and contact information for Comprehensive Epilepsy Programs across the country.
www.naec-epilepsy.org

American Epilepsy Society

This is the organization for professionals in epilepsy care. It has a find a doctor tool
www.aesnet.org





*Epilepsy Foundations throughout the country have additional materials
and offer a variety of programs to help people understand this common disorder*

*For further information about epilepsy and the name of the Epilepsy Foundation near you,
log on to www.epilepsyfoundation.org or call **800 332-1000**.*

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