

# Affective or Mood Disorders

## Depression

Depression is the most common mental health condition in the UK. It can be caused by a combination of factors. It often runs in families, suggesting a genetic component and it may be linked to some chemical imbalance in the brain. Life events, which may trigger depression, include bereavement, chronic illness, unemployment, relationship problems and financial difficulties. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a specific type of depression caused by a biochemical imbalance in the brain due to lack of sunlight in winter.

## Possible Symptoms

The symptoms will vary with each individual in nature and severity. They may include:

- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Constant questioning of thoughts and actions; a need for reassurance
- Feeling vulnerable and being oversensitive to criticism
- Loss of energy and the ability to concentrate, inability to do simple tasks
- Changes in weight and lack of interest in personal appearance
- Sleep disruption or a need to sleep very long hours
- Withdrawal from friends/family/colleagues; feeling lonely/ isolated
- Low self esteem
- Lacking motivation
- Loss of enjoyment in everyday activities
- Low mood.

## Bi-polar Disorder

Bi-polar disorder, previously known as manic depression, is much less common than depression. The first episode usually occurs below the age of 30. It is characterised by dramatic swings between manic “highs” (such as big ideas, florid speech and risk taking which may have a major impact on job hunting) and depressed “lows”, alternating with periods of normal mood. The intervals and duration of each period will vary.