

Shake It Off; Dr. Maria Kovacs on Mood and Depression

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Shake it Off

Have you ever had a bad mood you just couldn't shake? Everyone feels grouchy or irritable some days. But a bad mood or major mood swings that go on too long may signal a bigger problem. The good news is that certain healthy habits can help you boost your mood.

"Some people are more moody than other people. Normal mood actually varies from person to person," explains Dr. Carlos Zarate, chief of NIH's mood disorders group.

That's because we all have different "temperaments," or combinations of personality traits that are biologically based. These are fairly stable over time.

"Considerable research shows that people really differ in their basic temperament," says Dr. Maria Kovacs, an NIH-funded psychologist at the University of Pittsburgh. "There are some people who temperamentally are always in a 'good' mood. And there are people who are temperamentally always in a 'bad' mood."

Read the whole story: [National Institutes of Health](#)

Dr. Maria Kovacs on Mood and Depression

Excerpts from our conversation with Dr. Kovacs, distinguished professor of psychiatry and psychology at the University of Pittsburgh

NIHNIH: What is mood?

Kovacs: In general, in clinical psychology, when we talk about mood what you are referring to is an emotion that lasts more than a brief period. Now, it's a very unsatisfactory definition because nobody has been able to come up with an idea as to how long an emotion has to last for it to be called a mood.

I think that when you ask people, they say "I know when I'm in a bad mood." So people have their own internal clocks as to how long it has to last before they will say, "I am in a bad mood." But we're really talking about something that lasts more than just a few minutes.

Read the whole story: [National Institutes of Health](#)