

Bipolar Disorder



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What is Bipolar Disorder?

- Bipolar disorder is more than a normal mood swing and more than the normal changes in mood.
- People with bipolar disorder will swing from feeling very high (mania) to feeling very low (depression). These swings are called episodes.
- These episodes may last a day or several days. In rare cases, they can last a week or several months. An episode can occur once a year or several times a year. An episode can occur once in a lifetime or frequently throughout the lifespan.
- Bipolar disorder affects all parts of a person's life including work, school and personal relationships.
- Bipolar disorder can affect a person's physical health.
- There is no way to know if the first episode will be a mania, a depression, or a mixed mania/depression episode.

What you should know about Bipolar Disorder:

- Bipolar is an illness of the chemical balance of the brain like diabetes or high blood pressure.
- Just like any other illness, bipolar disorder requires lifelong treatment .
- If left untreated, your bipolar disorder will not go away. The bipolar condition can worsen and result in hospitalization and/or serious physical, social and financial problems.

- With treatment your bipolar disorder can improve. This will lead to more stable moods with fewer episodes, and the episodes you have will not be so bad.
- You can lead a normal life by working with your doctor and staying with your treatment.

The Bipolar Spectrum

- Not everyone with bipolar will behave the same.
- Think of bipolar disorder as a spectrum of illness on which you can move up or down depending on your state of mind.
- It is important to remember that a diagnosis of bipolar disorder requires episodes of both mania and depression.

How Bipolar Disorder is classified:

- Bipolar I – Extreme episodes of full blown mania and major depression.
- Bipolar II – Episodes of hypomania (mild to moderate mania) and major depression.
- Cyclothymia – Periods of hypomania and mild depression lasting at least two years.
- Rapid Cycling – Four or more bipolar episodes (symptoms of mania or hypomania and depression within one year).
- Mixed Episode – When you swing between mania and depression every day for at least one week.

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Signs and Symptoms of Mania

- Racing Thoughts
- Agitation
- Loud and fast speech
- Illogical speech
- Distraction
- Decrease sleep or no sleep at all for days
- Spending too much money or too much credit often leading to debt.
- Hyper sexual and unsafe sexual practice
- Impulsive behavior
- Grandiose ideas and projects
- Paranoid ideas and actions
- Psychotic symptoms

Depression Symptoms

- Increase in weight or decrease in weight
- Too much eating or limited eating
- Early morning awakening
- Not able to fall asleep
- Not able to stay asleep
- Irritable mood
- Restlessness
- Fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Thoughts of suicide
- Depressed mood for most of the day, every day in a row for over two weeks

Diagnosis is Difficult:

Diagnosing bipolar disorder is difficult and is based only on your symptoms. There are no tests that you can take. Be sure to work closely with your doctor to report your symptoms as well as any family history of bipolar disorder.

