

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that is characterized by extreme changes in a person's mood, energy and ability to think clearly. These changes in mood are categorized as *mania*, *hypomania* and *depression*. Historically, bipolar disorder was known as manic-depressive illness or manic depression. These periods of highs and lows differ from the typical ups-and-downs in that they make it difficult for people to carry out day-to-day tasks.

These changes in mood range from manic episodes of extremely "up", elated, irritable, or energized behavior to depressive episodes of "down", sad, indifferent, or hopeless feelings. Less severe manic episodes are known as hypomanic episodes. Severe episodes of mania or depression may include psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations or delusions. Usually, these psychotic symptoms mirror a person's extreme mood.

Risk Factors

An exact cause of bipolar disorder is unknown. However, research suggests that a combination of factors may contribute to the disorder. Factors are brain structure and function, genetics, and stressful life events. Substance use is associated with exacerbation of manic symptoms.



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Additional Information

National Alliance On Mental Illness (NAMI)
www.nami.org
National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
www.nimh.nih.gov

Additional Support

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
call or text 988
chat at 988lifeline.org
NAMI Helpline
call (800) 950-NAMI or text "Helpline" to 62640
Veterans and Their Loved Ones Crisis Line
call (800) 273-8255 or text 838255
National Helpline
call 211 for referrals for services such as housing, food, mental health, crisis and emergency, legal assistance, etc.
NIMH Resource Center
call (866) 615-6464

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Bipolar Disorder



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Symptoms

Symptoms of bipolar disorder may vary. A person with bipolar disorder may experience manic, hypomanic, depressive, or "mixed" symptoms during an episode. In a mixed episode, someone might experience both manic and depressive symptoms. Mood episodes can last a couple of days, a week, or sometimes longer.

Manic Symptoms

- Elevated, expansive, or irritable mood
- Inflated self-esteem or grandiosity
- Increased energy and activity level
- Racing thoughts
- Decreased need for sleep
- Easily distracted
- Difficulty concentrating/focusing
- More talkative than usual
- Impulsive or risky behavior

Depressive Symptoms

- Feeling sad or down
- Feeling slowed down
- Trouble falling asleep, waking up too early, or sleeping too much
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of interest or pleasure
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- Thoughts of death or suicide

The disorder is often diagnosed during late teens or early adulthood. At times even diagnosed during childhood.

The condition affects men and women equally, with about 2.8% of the US population diagnosed with bipolar disorder and 83% of these cases are classified as severe.

Types of Bipolar Disorder

- **Bipolar I** is defined by a pattern of depressive and manic episodes with manic symptoms present for at least seven days and present most of the day, nearly every day. Manic symptoms may be so severe that it causes impairment in social or occupational functioning or hospitalization is needed. Mixed episodes, when someone experiences manic and depressive symptoms at the same time, are also possible.
- **Bipolar II** is defined by a pattern of depressive symptoms and hypomania, which is a less severe form of mania. Hypomania has less of an impact on a person's functioning and does not require hospital care. Hypomanic symptoms typically last at least four days and are followed by a period of depressed mood.
- **Cyclothymic** (also called cyclothymia) is defined by recurring hypomanic and depressive symptoms that are not intense enough or do not last long enough to qualify as hypomanic or depressive episodes.



How is Bipolar Disorder treated?

Although symptoms of bipolar disorder appear episodically, ongoing mental health treatment is important to recovery.

Treatment may include:

- medications, such as mood stabilizers, that reduce the severity of symptoms or prevent mood episodes
- talk therapy, which may help individuals develop strategies to manage symptoms
- medications to treat related issues, such as sleep or anxiety
- in addition to medication, creative and holistic approaches such as art therapy, exercise, meditation
- a combination of treatments

"The humanity we all share is more important than the mental illnesses we may not." - Elyn Saks

How can I support a loved one ?

It can be hard knowing how to support a loved one experiencing symptoms of bipolar disorder. Below are a few ideas to help your loved one:

- Learning more about your loved one's mental illness
- Providing them with love and support
- Encouraging your loved one to stay connected to mental health treatment
- Staying connected to your loved one's treatment team