



### What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is also sometimes called manic depression, bipolar affective disorder or bipolar mood disorder.

Bipolar disorder is an illness in which there are extreme changes or swings in mood.

Everyone has times in their life when they feel very happy (such as when you are about to go on holiday) or very sad (such as when a family member dies). But it only becomes a disorder when the mood changes are unusual or extreme. This can range from being unusually happy (known as mania or hypomania), to being unusually sad (depression) for no apparent cause.

### What causes it?

Although the causes are not fully understood, bipolar disorder tends to run in families. In people who have bipolar disorder, episodes may happen at times of stress or disrupted sleep.

### How common is it?

Bipolar disorder is extremely rare in young children, but there are quite a few studies that suggest that it may start in teenage years and in early adult life. It affects about one in 100 adults.

### What are the symptoms?

In bipolar affective disorder a person can have manic/hypomanic episodes, depressive episodes or mixed episodes.

There are different types of this disorder depending on how severe the symptoms are or how long they last.

In between the highs and lows, there are usually 'normal' periods that can last for weeks or months. However, for some people, especially when they have had disorder from some time, these periods of 'normalcy' can be shorter or difficult to see.

### What can you do?

The high or low episodes can last from a few weeks to months. It is important to recognise that you are not alone and to keep up hope. Some people only have one or two episodes. For others the highs and lows can occur through their adult life. When this happens, it is important that you learn to live with it and manage it.

- The first step is recognising that something is different or a problem. Other people are likely to have noticed that you seem different from your usual self, particularly those who live with you.
- Speak to people who know you well, such as family and friends.
- Seeking medical advice early on is very important. If the bipolar illness can be identified and treated quickly, this reduces its harmful effects.
- If you already have a diagnosis, understand your illness and problems. This can help you to take control and get help before it gets more difficult. This can mean steps like planning for a crisis and making choices about your career.
- Do things which help you to have a good health, like having a balanced healthy diet, doing some exercise, and getting a good night's sleep.
- Try to identify what makes you feel 'stressed' and identify ways of dealing with it.

### How is it treated?

Speak to your doctor; they can prescribe medication of a wide range of therapies to support people with bi-polar.

Below is a list of the sort of symptoms that can occur in each type of episode. You need to have at least one manic or hypomanic episode to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

You need to have several symptoms at the same time for at least several days. If there is just one symptom, then it is unlikely to be bipolar disorder.

### Symptoms that can occur during a 'high' or manic episode

- feeling incredibly happy or 'high' in mood, or very excited
- feeling irritable
- talking too much -increased talkativeness
- racing thoughts
- increased activity and restlessness
- difficulty in concentrating, constant changes in plans
- over confidence and inflated ideas about yourself or your abilities
- decreased need for sleep
- not looking after yourself
- increased sociability or over-familiarity
- increased sexual energy
- Overspending of money or other types of reckless or extreme behaviour.

### Symptoms that can occur during a depressive episode

- feeling very sad most of the time
- decreased energy and activity
- not being able to enjoy things you normally like doing
- lack of appetite
- disturbed sleep
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

## If you have Bi-Polar follow the 10 steps

