

Bipolar disorder

What is Bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a brain illness. It causes dramatic shifts in mood, energy and activity levels. This disorder is also called manic-depressive illness. If untreated, the serious mood swings can damage relationships and cause problems in jobs and in school.

Symptoms

People diagnosed with bipolar disorder have changes in mood, energy and activity levels. That can mean they go from being overly happy or “up” (manic episode) to being very hopeless or “down” (depressive episode).

Some people may have only manic or depressive symptoms (bipolar II) and some may have a mix of both (bipolar I). Symptoms will be different for everyone.

| Manic Symptoms | Depressive Symptoms |
|---|---|
| <u>Mood changes:</u> > Long times of feeling excited. > Very irritable and jumpy. | <u>Mood changes:</u> > Long times of feeling sad or hopeless. > Loss of interest in things once enjoyed. > Thoughts of death/suicide. |
| <u>Behavior changes:</u> > Talking very fast. > Easily distracted. > Very little sleep. > Doing impulsive things > Risky behavior (i.e. reckless sex or spending a lot of money). > Increased activity. | <u>Behavior changes:</u> > Feeling tired and having little energy. > Unable to concentrate, forgetful. > Restless or irritable. > Change in sleep, eating and other habits. |

Causes/Risk Factors

There is not one cause for bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder may be hereditary. Children with a parent or brother/sister who have the disorder are more likely to develop the illness. There may be differences in the brain of people diagnosed with bipolar disorder versus those without it. Symptoms often appear in those in their late teens to early adult years.

Treatment

Effective treatment helps many people to have better control of their mood swings and other symptoms. It even helps those with the most difficult forms of the illness.

Treatment may include:

- Therapy.
- Medicines.
- Seeing your doctor regularly to keep track of medicines and any changes in moods.

How Can I Help Myself?

Treatment may take time and patience. Some ways to help yourself feel better may include:

- Try to get enough sleep.
- Keep a regular routine. Go to sleep at the same time and eat meals at the same time.
- Go to your doctor and discuss treatment. Call if you notice major changes in your mood.
- Stay on your medicines. You may not feel better right away. Medicines take time. .
- Track your moods and symptoms and be active in your treatment. Communicate with your treatment providers.

Where Can I Go for Help?

- For more information, call the National Association of Mental Illness Help Line: 1-800-950-6264.