

Bipolar Disorder

What is it?

- Bipolar disorder is characterized by drastic and intense shifts in mood, activity level, and energy.
- These shifts in mood and energy levels are more severe than the normal ups and downs experienced by everyone else.
- Individuals with bipolar shift between an extreme state of happiness, energy, and euphoria (mania or hypomania) to extreme sadness and fatigue (depression).
- All individuals with bipolar disorder have manic episodes, or high highs, which impair daily functioning, but not all become depressed.
- These periods of mania and depression last distinct periods of days to weeks, much longer than an average mood swing. Individuals who experience bipolar do have periods of neutral mood as well.
- Episodes of mood swings can occur rarely or multiple times a year. Some may experience emotional symptoms between episodes while some do not.
- Average age onset is 25 years old, but adolescents and children can have it.

Genetics

- Bipolar disorder commonly runs in families.
- 80 to 90% of individuals with bipolar have a relative with bipolar disorder or depression

Symptoms

- Manic Episode
 - At least one week long; high-spirited or irritable mood for most of the day most days
 - Leads to problems in daily functioning
 - More energy than usual; abnormally upbeat
 - Exaggerated sense of well-being and self-confidence
 - Decreased need for sleep; feels energetic despite lack of sleep
 - Increased or faster speech
 - Uncontrollable racing thoughts or quickly changing ideas or topics when speaking
 - Distractibility
 - Increased activity—restlessness, working on multiple projects at one
 - Increased risky behavior; unaware of negative consequences of their actions
 - Some individuals experience disorganized thinking, false beliefs, and/or hallucinations in manic episodes—psychotic features
- Hypomanic Episode
 - Less severe manic symptoms
 - Last at least four days in a row rather than a week
 - Do not lead to major problems in daily functioning
- Major Depressive Episode
 - Lasts at least two weeks, and has five of the following symptoms:
 - Intense sadness or despair
 - Loss of interest in activities the person once enjoyed
 - Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
 - Fatigue
 - Increased or decreased sleep
 - Increased or decreased appetite
 - Restlessness (e.g., pacing) or slowed speech or movement
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Frequent thoughts of death or suicide

Types of Bipolar Disorders

- Bipolar I Disorder
- Must have had at least one, if not more, manic episodes for at least seven days
- May have a depressive episode, but it is not necessary for a diagnosis
- Bipolar II Disorder
- Must have had at least one depressive episode and one hypomanic episode, but without ever having a manic episode
- Cyclothymic Disorder
- A mild form of bipolar disorder where people experience frequent mood swings, with hypomania and depressive symptoms lasting at least two years
- During the two-year period, the mood swings have lasted for at least half the time and have never stopped for more than two months

Treatment Options for Bipolar

- Psychotherapy
- Medication
- Self-management strategies