



Tip sheet

Bipolar disorder

Understand the facts

What do I need to know?

Bipolar disorder is a mental health condition that causes dramatic shifts in a person's mood, energy and ability to think clearly. It typically begins in adolescence or early adulthood, although it can start in childhood or later in life. People with bipolar experience high and low moods, known as mania and depression, which differ from the typical ups-and-downs most people experience. There are usually periods of normal mood in between. If left untreated, bipolar disorder usually worsens. However, with a good treatment plan, including psychotherapy, medications, good lifestyle choices, a regular schedule and early identification of symptoms, many people live well with the condition.

Signs and symptoms

Mania symptoms may include:

- Excessive energy, activity, restlessness, racing thoughts, racing speech.
- Decreased need for sleep without experiencing fatigue.
- Extreme "high" or euphoric feelings.
- Exaggerated optimism and self-confidence.
- Impulsive, poor judgement, easily distracted.
- Excessive irritability, aggressive behavior.
- Reckless behavior, unusual sex drive or abuse of alcohol and drugs.

See Depression Tip Sheet for signs and symptoms of depression.

Treatment options

Finding a treatment plan that works best for the individual is critical for recovery. A combination of the following can help with bipolar disorder:

- Medication.
- Therapy: both group and individual therapy can be helpful.
- Lifestyle changes: establishing a sleep schedule, reducing alcohol and caffeine intake and exercising regularly.
- Meditation and mindfulness.
- Managing emotional ups and downs.
- Support and self-help groups.

Reach out

- Talk to your doctor or therapist about what you need to achieve recovery.
- Join a support group either in-person or online.

Need more information?

- Reach Out: <https://au.reachout.com/articles/what-are-personality-disorders>.
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance: http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=education_bipolar.
- Mental Health America: <https://www.dbsalliance.org/education/bipolar-disorder/>.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Bipolar-Disorder>.
- Depression Tip Sheet.