

BIPOLAR DISORDER

Bipolar disorder is a serious mental illness (SMI) that causes dramatic shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to think clearly.

People who struggle with this disorder experience extreme high and low moods, known as mania and depression. These are vastly different from the typical moods most people experience and are difficult to manage, affecting daily functioning.

CATEGORY	MANIC EPISODE	DEPRESSIVE EPISODE
MOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Abnormally elevated mood, expansive emotions (broad, dramatic), euphoria ✓ Irritable, critical, argumentative, stubborn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Depressed, sad or very irritable; can't be cheered up ✓ Loss of interest and pleasure in daily activities
PHYSICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Decreased need for sleep ✓ Insomnia, staying up all night ✓ Increased appetite ✓ Sudden weight loss ✓ Increased sex drive (often to the point of hypersexuality) ✓ Catatonia (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Insomnia or sleeping too much ✓ Change in appetite or significant, unintentional change in weight ✓ Visibly slowed down or agitated ✓ Extreme fatigue and lack of energy ✓ Decreased sex drive ✓ Catatonia (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>)
BEHAVIORAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Impulsive, intrusive, uninhibited ✓ Increased goal setting and creativity ✓ Disorganized, easily distracted ✓ Recklessness; spending money, bad business investments, sexual misadventures ✓ No concern about consequences of behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Decreased motivation ✓ Decreased task performance ✓ Withdrawal and isolation ✓ Lack of attention to hygiene and appearance ✓ No desire to talk, interact, socialize ✓ Grossly disorganized (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>)
THINKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Inflated self-concepts of power, greatness, importance (grandiosity) ✓ Pressured speech ✓ Racing thoughts (flight of ideas) ✓ Rapid shifts of attention ✓ Poor concentration ✓ Memory distortion ✓ Delusions (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>) ✓ Disorganized, incoherent speech (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Accusatory, self-blaming thoughts ✓ Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt ✓ Extremely low self-esteem ✓ Marked indecisiveness or the inability to think, remember or concentrate ✓ Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts, suicidal plans ✓ Delusions (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>) ✓ Disorganized, incoherent speech (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>)
SENSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lack of sensitivity to heat, cold, hunger, thirst, pain, injury ✓ Seeks over-stimulation ✓ Hallucinations (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hypersensitive to noise, light, stress ✓ Hallucinations (<i>possible psychotic stage</i>)



Each year, **3% of adults** in the U.S., or about 7 million people, experience bipolar disorder



About **83% of cases** are classified as causing **severe impairment**



The **average age** when people begin experiencing symptoms is **25**, with similar rates in men and women

Some people with bipolar disorder enjoy their manic periods. They may come to believe that there is no harm during mania; they might have extra energy, they might feel happier, they might accomplish more. In this way, mania can be seductive. Although mania can feel enjoyable, a person's mood can still quickly and unexpectedly change. And the more time their mood stays in an unstable state, the more likely they are to end up with potential long-term consequences to their health.

TREATMENT



Proper treatment helps most people who live with bipolar disorder control their mood swings and other symptoms. Early detection is very important. If left untreated, symptoms can often get worse. And because it is a chronic illness, treatment must be ongoing.

There is no one approach to treating bipolar disorder. However, research shows that patients who take medications are more likely to improve if they also receive intensive psychotherapy interventions at the same time.

Bipolar disorder can be treated and managed in several ways.

- ✓ **Psychotherapy**, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and family-focused therapy.
- ✓ **Medications**, such as mood stabilizers, antipsychotic medications and, to a lesser extent, antidepressants.
- ✓ **Self-management strategies**, like education and recognition of an episode's early symptoms.
- ✓ **Complementary and alternative approaches** including exercise, meditation and nutrition can support, but not replace, treatment.
- ✓ **Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)** can be considered for severe mania or depression. Although ECT is highly effective, it is reserved for specific situations and for symptoms that have not responded to other treatments.

RECOVERY



RECOVERY from serious mental illness is not only possible — for many people today, it is probable.

RECOVERY is a journey, not a destination.

RECOVERY is often misinterpreted as a day when an individual is “healed” and done with treatment. Unfortunately, recovery is not an event. It is an incremental process towards wellness with good days and not-so-good days.

Some information that you read or hear may make it seem that **RECOVERY** is rare or unlikely. But people can and do recover from serious mental illness.

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