

# BIPOLAR DISORDER

***MAKING MENTAL HEALTH  
MATTER FOR 30 YEARS***



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# BIPOLAR DISORDER

## What is Bipolar Disorder:

Bipolar Disorder is a treatable Mental Health condition marked by extreme changes in mood, thought, energy, and behaviour. It is not a character flaw or a sign of personal weakness. Bipolar Disorder was previously known as Manic Depression because a person's mood can alternate between Mania (highs) and Depression (lows). These changes in mood, or "mood swings," can last for hours, days, weeks or months.

## Bipolar Disorder symptoms:



### Mania: The "Highs" of Bipolar Disorder



- heightened mood, extreme optimism and self-confidence
- decreased need for sleep without experiencing tiredness
- excessive irritability, aggressive behaviour
- grandiose thoughts, inflated sense of self-importance
- racing speech, racing thoughts, flight of ideas
- impulsiveness, poor judgment, easily distracted
- in the most severe cases, delusions and hallucinations
- reckless behaviour



### Depression: The "Lows" of Bipolar Disorder



- prolonged sadness or unexplained crying spells
- changes in eating and sleep patterns
- irritability, anger, worry, agitation, anxiety
- pessimism, indifference
- loss of energy, persistent exhaustion
- feelings of guilt, worthlessness
- inability to concentrate, indecisiveness
- unexplained aches and pains
- inability to take pleasure in previously enjoyed interests, social withdrawal
- thoughts of death or suicide

## Types of Bipolar Disorder:

There are a few different types of Bipolar Disorder. Each kind is defined by the length, frequency, & pattern of episodes of mania and depression. Mood swings that often come with Bipolar Disorder are usually more severe than ordinary mood changes and symptoms can last weeks or months, severely impacting a person's life.



**Bipolar I Disorder:** Bipolar I is characterised by episodes of Depression and one or more episodes of mania or having mixed episodes (which is when you experience symptoms of both mania and depression).

**Bipolar II Disorder:** Bipolar II disorder is diagnosed when a person experiences a pattern of depressive episodes and hypomanic (but not full-blown mania), and may experience longer and more severe depressive episodes. Bipolar II disorder is sometimes misdiagnosed as Depression if episodes of hypomania go unrecognized.

**Cyclothymia:** Cyclothymia is a milder form of Bipolar Disorder characterised by several episodes of hypomania and less severe episodes of Depression that alternate for at least two years. The severity of this illness may change over time.

**Other Specified Bipolar and Related Disorder:** Previously known and referred to as Bipolar Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (BP-NOS), this diagnosis is often used when individuals have clear episodes of manic and depressive symptoms but do not fit Bipolar I, Bipolar II, or Cyclothymia. This may change over time.

## Helpful hints to help you prepare for your doctors appointment



### Questions your doctor may ask on your first visit:

- Describe the symptoms you are experiencing (you can show them the symptoms you ticked on the brochure)
- How do your symptoms impact your life (example: are you struggling to complete different tasks or getting out of bed?)
- Your family history
- What types of emotions or moods are you going through?
- How long your mood episodes last for?
- How many mood episodes have you had?
- How often your mood episodes occur?

# TREATMENT FOR BIPOLAR

## Treatment Options:

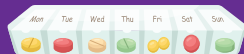
Mental health treatment aims to reduce symptoms & enhance wellness. There are many different options available to treat Bipolar Mood Disorder, but it is advisable to seek a combination of psychotherapy and psychosocial treatments, medications, & lifestyle changes. Everyone's path to wellness is unique & will differ from person to person. What works well for you may not work well for someone else. This is why it is so important for a Mental Healthcare User to be aware of what options are available and work best for them.

## Psychotherapy:

Therapy is not just about sharing your problems with a provider; it also should help you develop new



copying strategies that will help you have the life that you want to live. Some therapy requires that you practice various coping skills and wellness strategies in between sessions. Exercises such as tracking your mood, keeping a journal, or trying new activities may be encouraged to help you make progress. There are many different types of therapeutic methods, like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, Family – Focused Therapy, Psychodynamic therapy, Art Therapy and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT). Your therapist will assist you in choosing what would be most helpful for you.



## Medication:

It is advisable to have a combination of treatments. Therapy & medication are quite critical in treating Bipolar Disorder. You or a loved one will need to work closely with your doctor to find the right type of medication & dosage as it does differ from person to person. There are different types of medications to help treat those living with Bipolar Disorder like Antidepressants, Mood Stabilizers and Antipsychotics. Your psychiatrist will put together a combination that will be best to help with your symptoms. It may take some time for the medication to start working fully, so keep taking them as prescribed.

Some medications may have side effects such as dry mouth, constipation, sleepiness, blurred vision, weight gain or loss and or dizziness. These may increase or lessen or go away entirely over time while other side effects can be long-term. Side effects can be managed by working with your doctor, it may be suggested to adjust the time of day you take the medication, taking the medication with (or without) food or spreading the medication doses across the day. Remember to track how the medication makes you feel and share the feedback with your doctor.



Support Groups can be an excellent way to help maintain your wellbeing and support treatment. There are many different types of support groups that may meet your needs. Being in a place with individuals who have similar experiences can make you feel less alone. Bipolar Disorder can feel very isolating at times, but joining a Support group can help you with coping.

## Coping with Bipolar Disorder:

A Bipolar Disorder diagnosis can come with different emotions and feelings. You might be relieved to finally have a diagnosis or you could feel uneasy about what the future will hold. No matter how you might be feeling, know that Bipolar Disorder is quite common, and highly treatable. By taking charge of your life with Bipolar Disorder, you can maximize your well-being and live a functional and successful life.

Take an active role in your treatment. When it comes to your treatment plan, make sure you guide the doctor by providing all your information so that you can receive the correct treatment. Keep your appointments and stay consistent on your medication.

Start by becoming an expert about Bipolar Disorder and your treatment options. Study the symptoms so you can recognize them in yourself. Learn all you can about your treatment options so you're able to make well-informed decisions about your own care.

Use your knowledge to collaborate with your doctor or therapist to create a treatment plan. It might be helpful to draw up an outline of your wellness goals and how you want to accomplish them. You know your body, moods, and symptoms best. You are the only person who can definitively say if a treatment is working for you and aligns with your wellness goals. Don't be afraid to speak up if something isn't working for you.

Be realistic and patient as you work with your doctor to form a treatment plan. Don't go in expecting an immediate result, it doesn't happen overnight, and it can take time to find a treatment that works for you.



Treatment preferences, like who you want to care for you, what treatments and medications do and do not work, and who is authorized to make decisions on your behalf.

