

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder is a medical condition where someone alternates between states of depression and an elevated mode (referred to as mania). These states may last from weeks to months with periods of feeling “normal” in between. Frequent shifts in state (more than four a year) is referred to as rapid cycling.

Signs and Symptoms

While bipolar disorder is often thought of in just its polar states of mania and depression there are three total states:

- a high state called mania
- A low state called depression
- A well state where people feel normal and function well

Someone in a manic phase might present the following: exaggerated self-esteem, decreased need for sleep, more talkative than usual, racing thoughts, easily distracted, excessive energy

Someone in a depressive phase might present the following: depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure in activities that use to be enjoyable, weight loss or gain, difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much, apathy or agitation, loss, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, inability to concentrate, thoughts of suicide

Common Causes

The precise causes of bipolar disorder are unknown, however there is strong evidence biological factors, such as genetics, play a role. There are many risks that contribute to Bipolar disorder emerging including that it might be triggered by stresses or other factors in someone who already has the condition. The broader list of risk factors includes:

- Genetics
- Environment
- Childhood trauma
- Stressful events (losing a loved one, big accident)
- Unhealthy habits (sleep, eating)
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Brain chemistry

*Factors also play a role in the severity of symptoms, and mitigating unhealthy habits can help moderate the severity.



Treatment

The main treatment for bipolar disorder is medication and psychotherapy. Both treatments might be needed to bring symptoms under control, but usually medications are the first step. A prescription is required for medications to treat bipolar. If you believe you should get into contact with your healthcare provider for both diagnosis and subsequent treatment options.

Self-Assessment

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/screening/online/>

- The above link connects to an online screening tool that will help you become aware of possible risk factors you may need to address with a healthcare provider.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL