

Bipolar Disorder

(Easy Reading Version)



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Bipolar disorder causes huge shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to think clearly. It has high moods called mania and low moods called depression. Bipolar is much more than just being moody.

Symptoms

A person with bipolar may have very high and low moods. If it's severe, they may have psychotic episodes. This means they see or hear things that aren't there or have strange beliefs that aren't true.

- **Mania** is a very high mood. Hypomania is a high mood that is a little milder than mania. Common symptoms of mania are:
 - Sleeping for only a few hours but not feeling tired
 - Talking very fast about a lot of different things
 - Not thinking before making choices, making poor choices
 - Taking huge risks
 - Getting easily upset

- **Depression** is a low mood. It can make it hard for people to live their daily life. It lasts at least two weeks. When it's mild and all the time, it's called dysthymia. Some symptoms of depression are:
 - Feeling very sad
 - Feeling very tired, sleeping a lot
 - Feeling angry, guilty, or worthless
 - Eating too little or too much
 - Not feeling interested in fun activities
 - Having thoughts of death or suicide

Causes

Scientists believe many things can lead to bipolar disorder:

- **Genetics.** If a family member has bipolar disorder, you are more likely to get it.
- **Stress.** A stressful event can lead to bipolar disorder, like a death. Drugs can lead to bipolar too.
- **Brain Structure.** There are some parts of the brain that are a little different in people with bipolar disorder. Brain damage can also lead to bipolar disorder.

Treatment

Treatment needs to be ongoing. The sooner they start treatment, the better. There are many types:

- **Medications,** such as mood stabilizers, antipsychotic medications, and antidepressants.
- **Psychotherapy,** such as cognitive behavioral therapy and family-focused therapy.
- **Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)**
- **Self-management Strategies and Education:** Learning how to manage feelings and moods. These skills help a person stay in control during mania and depression.
- **Complementary Health Approaches,** such as meditation, faith, and prayer.