



Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder, also known as manic-depression, is a biologically caused mental illness in which a person's mood drastically swings from the depths of depression to the intense highs of mania. Bipolar Disorder will affect nearly one in 100 people at some point in their lives. There are generally periods of normal mood as well, but if left untreated, the moods will continue to swing from one extreme to the other.

Bipolar Disorder can run in families, so there is a high likelihood that there is a genetic cause for the illness. Research has pointed to events occurring within the body as possible causes of Bipolar Disorder, such as an irregular production or release of hormones and imbalances in the way brain cells communicate.

Symptoms: Manic Phase

- **Feeling on top of the world.** A sensation of sheer and utter happiness that nothing can change - not even bad news or a horrifying event or tragedy.
- **Grandiose delusions.** Individuals imagine that they have special connections with God, celebrities, or political leaders.
- **Invincibility.** The person feels that nothing can prevent him or her from accomplishing any task.
- **Hyperactivity.** Scheduling more events in a day than can be accomplished; inability to relax or sit still.
- **Excessively risky behavior.** Reckless driving, outlandish spending sprees, foolish business investments, or out-of-character sexual behavior.
- **Uncontrollable racing thoughts/rapid speech.** Ideas that abruptly change from topic to topic expressed in loud, rapid speech that becomes increasingly incoherent.
- **Less need for sleep.**
- **Sudden irritability or rage,** particularly when grandiose plans are thwarted.

Symptoms: Depressed Phase

- **Intense sadness or despair.** The person feels helpless, hopeless, and worthless.
- **No interest in activities once enjoyed.**
- **Loss of energy, fatigue.**
- **Sleep difficulties.** Sleeping too much or not at all.
- **Changes in appetite.** A noticeable increase in appetite or a substantial weight loss unrelated to dieting.
- **Difficulty concentrating.**
- **Constant thoughts of death or suicide.**

**FURTHER HELP AND
INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT
PARK CENTER.**

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Treatment

Although the illness can become quite disabling, Bipolar Disorder is very treatable. Unfortunately, there is a high probability that people with Bipolar Disorder will not comply with the treatment they are given, particularly when they are in a manic phase and “feeling good.” However, treatment is essential at all stages of the illness and must be strictly followed if a successful outcome is to be reached.

Lithium is commonly given to stabilize the manic phase of the illness and prevent future mood swings. Other medications are available if lithium is ineffective. All medications can have side effects, but with proper monitoring, medication can return thousands of people to productive lives.

People undergoing treatment for Bipolar Disorder can also benefit from psychotherapy, in which the individual and a psychiatrist work out the problems and reestablish relationships damaged by the illness. Since Bipolar Disorder can cause serious disruptions and create an intensely stressful family situation, family members may also benefit from a professional resource, particularly mental health advocacy groups.