

# Adult Bipolar Disorders

## What is Bipolar Disorder or Manic-Depression?

Bipolar Disorder, formerly known as Manic-Depressive Disorder, is a mental health condition in which a person experiences extreme shifts in mood. A manic state may be characterized by an unusually “up” mood, perhaps accompanied by extreme excitement, joyfulness or activity level. Extreme irritability or agitation may also accompany a manic state. A depressive state is a particularly “down” mood, and may be accompanied by extreme sadness or hopelessness. The depression and mania can each last for days, weeks or even months. Changes in mood state are reflected in changes in energy and activity level, sleep patterns and behaviors.

When it occurs, bipolar disorder typically begins in adolescence or early adulthood. According to the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance between 2-3% of adult Americans experience this serious condition which can seriously interfere with life activities and relationships. When not adequately managed, it may result in the loss of jobs, friends and marriages, and may be associated with substance use, and suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

A depressive phase of Bipolar Disorder may be experienced as:

- Intense sadness, hopelessness, and feeling of worthlessness
- Crying spells
- Inability to experience joy or pleasure
- Problems concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Feeling tired all the time
- An increase or decrease in sleeping and/or eating
- Thoughts of death and/or suicide

A manic phase of Bipolar Disorder may be experienced as:

- Feeling high, excited and very important
- Having grandiose, unrealistic ideas
- Sleeping very little and not feeling tired
- Increased physical activity
- Irritability, distractibility and rage
- Speaking and thinking very fast
- Reckless behavior such as spending sprees, driving dangerously or provocative sexual behavior

Source: <http://www.mhawestchester.org/content/adult-bipolar-disorders>

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## What Causes Bipolar Disorder?

Researchers are unclear as to the exact causes of Bipolar Disorder. However, it is believed that there are several factors that increase the likelihood of having Bipolar Disorder. These factors include one's personal history including a history of trauma, such as abuse, genetics, factors related to brain structure and brain chemistry, hormonal imbalances, and environmental stressors.

## How Can Bipolar Disorder Be Treated?

A combination of medication and talk therapy (counseling) can provide significant help to individuals diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. A variety of medications are used to help reduce the severity of symptoms and a range of talk therapies can provide the individual with tools and strategies to manage their symptoms. Individuals who have been diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and their loved ones may also benefit from family therapy, where they can learn to better cope with the condition together. Numerous treatment options are available and each individual's optimal treatment plan is unique. A major concern is that people who experience Bipolar Disorder often go years before they get the treatment they need.

### Additional Information about Bipolar Disorder

#### **National Institute of Mental Health**

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder/index.shtml>

NIMH is an agency of the United States government. This site has clear information about mental health conditions and provides information on how individuals and family members can recognize symptoms and get the help they need.

#### **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)**

<http://www.dbsalliance.org>

DBSA is a grass roots organization started in 1986 by people who had Bipolar Disorder. They have a Scientific Advisory Board of leading researchers in the area of Bipolar Disorder and Depression. Among the features of this easy-to-read site are additional information on symptoms of Clinical Depression, descriptions of specific medications and treatments and outlines of the available services. The telephone number for this organization is 800-826-3632.

#### **Mayo Clinic**

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bipolar-disorder/DS00356>

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Mayo Clinic is a not-for-profit medical practice headquartered in Rochester, Minnesota, dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of virtually every type of complex illness. It is part of Mayo Clinic's mission to serve as a reliable source of health information. This site offers a series of pages devoted to Bipolar Disorder, covering the following topics: Signs and symptoms; Causes; Risk factors; When to seek medical advice; Screening and diagnosis; Complications; Treatment; Prevention; Self-care; Coping skills; Complementary and alternative medicine.