



PATIENT
EDUCATION

Bipolar Disorder

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patienteducation@aub.edu.lb

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY of BEIRUT MEDICAL CENTER
المركز الطبي في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت

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What is bipolar disorder?

- Bipolar disorder is a chronic disorder characterized by abnormal changes in your mood that ranges between depression and mania (feeling high).
- These mood changes are different and much more severe than what people may normally experience during their everyday life.
- In the phase of depression, you mostly feel a loss of interest in activities and people, and you experience feelings of sadness and fatigue.
- In the mania phase, your feelings change to those of euphoria (intense happiness). You also feel an increase in energy and a decrease in your need for sleep.
- These mood shifts may occur a few times a year over a certain period of time. You may still experience periods of stable mood during those times.

There are two forms of this condition:

- **Bipolar I disorder:** You experience one or more manic episodes followed by a depressive episode.
- **Bipolar II disorder:** You experience less intense episodes of mania called hypomania. This type can also be followed by a depressive episode.

Rapid-Cycling Bipolar Disorder (RCBD)

- RCBD is a more intense form of bipolar disorder.
- You experience four or more episodes of depression, mania, hypomania, or a mixed state within a period of one year.
- RCBD is more common among people who have an early onset of bipolar.
- It is more common in women than in men.
- It may not be always present. You may experience it from time to time.

What are the causes of bipolar disorder?

The causes of bipolar disorder are unknown. Many factors may trigger the disease such as:

- Genetic factors (having a family member diagnosed with the disorder)

- Hormonal imbalances
- Differences in brain structure
- Environmental conditions such as stress and trauma
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Major life changes

What are the common symptoms of bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder is characterized by:

- Abnormal and difficult to predict mood changes that range between feeling hopeless and depressed to feeling euphoric and energetic
- Severe changes in energy and behavior

The most common signs and symptoms of mania include:

- Rapid speech
- Feelings of euphoria or feelings of intense irritability
- Increased energy and increased motivation to pursue goals
- Inflated self-esteem
- Racing thoughts, jumping from one idea to another
- Decreased need for sleep
- Spending sprees or unwise financial choices
- Engaging in impulsive and risky behaviors

The most common signs and symptoms of depression include:

- Feelings of guilt, sadness, and hopelessness
- Decreased or increased appetite
- Problems in concentrating
- Poor performance at work or school
- Irritability
- Loss of interest in activities once considered enjoyable
- Thoughts of death or attempting suicide

Severe episodes of mania or depression may sometimes be associated with psychotic symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations.

Detecting signs and symptoms early is the most important aspect of treatment. Contact your doctor if you experience any of the above symptoms.

Is there a treatment for bipolar disorder?

Yes.

- There are several effective treatments for bipolar disorder, and they depend on the severity of the condition.
- Treatment differs from one person to another.
- You might need one treatment modality or more to achieve the best results.

Common treatments of bipolar disorder include:

- **Medications (primary treatment):**

Your doctor might give you medications to stabilize your symptoms. The most common ones include but are not limited to:

- Lithium
- Benzodiazepines
- Antidepressants
- Antipsychotic medications

Always make sure to take your medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor.

Make sure to inform your doctor if you are experiencing any of the below side effects of mood stabilizers:

- Restlessness
- Dry mouth
- Bloating or indigestion
- Acne
- Joint or muscle pain
- Brittle nails or hair
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Heartburn

- **Psychotherapy:**

Psychotherapy consists of a series of techniques.

- **Psychoeducation**

It helps you and your family to better understand bipolar disorder and identify early on symptoms of a mood episode to inform your doctor. This will allow better monitoring of your symptoms and prevention of relapses in addition to better management of the disease and better control over your mood shifts.

- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)**

It helps you identify negative and unhealthy thoughts or beliefs that may trigger mood shifts and replace them with more positive and realistic ones. CBT also helps you monitor your symptoms.

- **Interpersonal and social rhythm therapy (IPSRT)**

It focuses on your sleeping, waking, and meal times to promote a stable daily rhythm and consistent schedule. This helps you manage mood symptoms.

• **Electroconvulsive therapy:**

Sometimes if medications fail to control the symptoms, electroconvulsive therapy may be effective. It is a medical procedure during which an electric current is safely produced in the brain intentionally, resulting in a brief seizure. It may be used for both mania and depression.

Can I prevent bipolar disorder?

There is no certain way to prevent bipolar disorder. However, you may prevent future mood episodes if you take your daily medications and follow the treatment plan offered by your doctor and psychologist.

What happens if bipolar disorder is not treated?

If left untreated, or if inadequately treated, you can face many other social problems such as:

- Loss of employment or poor academic performance
- Loss of finances
- Substance and/or alcohol use
- Suicide or attempted suicide
- Legal problems
- Problems in your relationship
- Loneliness and isolation

How can I cope with bipolar disorder?

Coping with bipolar disorder is a challenge for both you and your family. Manic episodes can sometimes include severe behavioral changes that can have a long-lasting impact on you and everyone involved. The transition into depression after a manic episode can also be difficult to cope with.

Do not let your bipolar disorder affect your daily routine. Instead, change your lifestyle.

- Engage in physical activity.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Quit smoking and drinking.
- Surround yourself with positive people.
- Engage in support groups.
- Keep a diary of your mood symptoms like the one below to improve your therapy process.

Tips for caregivers:

- As a family member, it is important to understand what the person is going through.
- Make sure to encourage him/her to seek professional help.
- Compliance with medication is one of the biggest challenges for patients. This is because the symptoms of mania or hypomania can sometimes be rewarding for the patient. As a caregiver, make sure he/she is taking the medications as prescribed by the doctor.
- It is also important to know that you might experience stress as a caregiver. If you find yourself under a lot of stress, take some time off and find ways to relax and be able to cope. It is important to remember to prioritize your needs. You may also seek professional help.

Daily monitoring schedule of mood symptoms

No Symptoms _____ 0
 Monitor Closely _____ 3
 Intervene _____ 5

Date	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Rapid speech							
Feelings of euphoria							
Increased energy and increased drive to achieve goals							
Inflated self-esteem							
Racing thoughts, jumping from one idea to another							
Decreased need for sleep							
Engaging in impulsive and risky behaviors							
Feelings of sadness and hopelessness							
Decreased or increased appetite							
Problems in concentrating							
Decreased performance at work or school							
Irritability							
Loss of interest in activities once considered enjoyable							
Thoughts of death or attempting suicide							

For any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to call the nurse on 01 - 759620, from 8:00 am till 5:00 pm or call your doctor at _____ . We are here to answer all your questions.

This educational material provides general information only. It does not constitute medical advice. Consult your healthcare provider to determine whether the information applies to you.