

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness defined by extreme emotional highs (mania) and lows (depression). Treatment usually includes a combination of psychotherapy and medication.

Depression (the "lows")	Mania (the "highs")
Typically last at least 2 weeks	Typically last at least 1 week
Symptoms must cause impairment	Symptoms must cause impairment
Depressed mood	Increase in goal-directed behaviour
Social withdrawal	Inflated self-esteem and euphoria
Loss of interest or pleasure	Racing Thoughts
Recurring thoughts of death	Pleasure-seeking without regard for consequences
Fatigue nearly every day	Decrease need for sleep



What does mania really look like?

During mania, people lose the ability to make rational decisions. Common behaviors include emptying bank accounts for an immediate thrill, leaving a loving spouse, or using dangerous drugs. Imagine your body has a motor—which you can't turn off – that's pushing you through bad decision after bad decision. When the motor finally shuts off, the damage has already been done.

Psychotherapy

Therapy for bipolar disorder often includes learning to recognize episodes of mania and depression before they get out of hand

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a common and well-supports treatment for **BDP**

Medication

Medication is a normal part of treatment for bipolar disorder. It can be very effective.

A type of medication referred to as a "mood stabilizers" are often used to manage emotional swings.





A combination of both psychotherapy and medication has been found to be the most effective treatment for bipolar disorder.

1 Common Misconceptions

"I sometimes feel really sad one minute, then happy the next. Is this bipolar disorder?"

The ups-and-downs of bipolar disorder are usually longer lasting than people think. Periods of depression typically last two weeks or more, while mania last a week or more. The symptoms of bipolar disorder are also much more extreme than regular mood swings.

"People are happy when they're manic."

Sometimes, but mania is usually a scary experience. Mania often comes with feelings of irritability and being unable to stop or slow down. Plus mania almost always end poorly.

"Someone with bipolar disorder shouldn't use anti-depressants because they'll become manic."

The decision to use anti-depressants should be made on a case-by-case basis by a doctor. Oftentimes, the benefits of anti-depressants far outweigh the risks, and they are an essential part of treatment.

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