



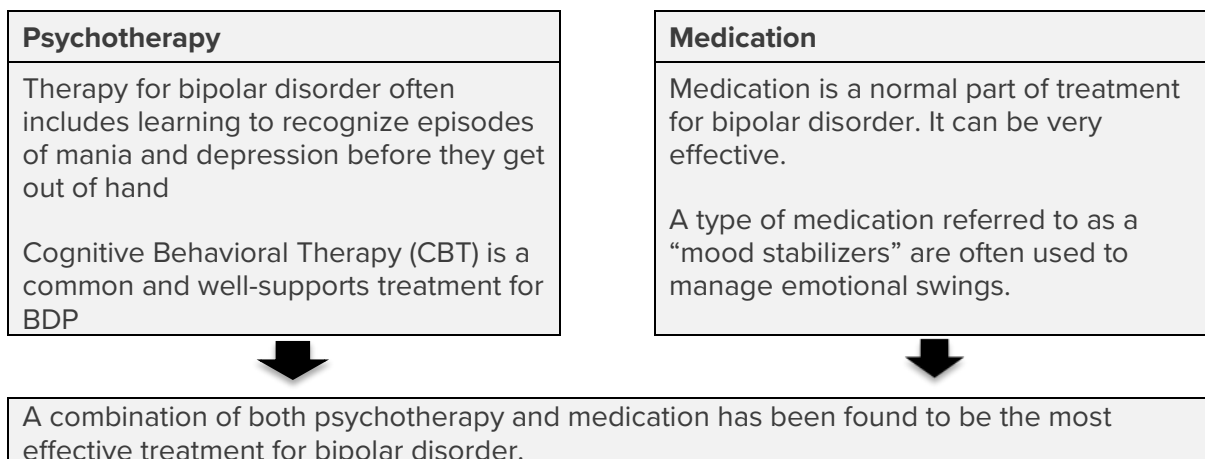
What is Bipolar Disorder?

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

What does mania really look like?

During mania, people lose the ability to make rational decisions. Common behaviours 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.



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.

Reference: 2015 Therapist Aid LLC; Provided by **TherapistAid.com**