

Bipolar Disorder



What is bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder, or manic depression, is a serious brain disorder that causes extreme shifts in mood, energy and functioning. It affects 2.3 million adult Americans, which is about 1.2% of the population, and can run in families.

While the exact cause of bipolar is not known, most researchers believe it is the result of a chemical imbalance in certain parts of the brain. Sometimes serious life events such as a serious loss, chronic illness, illicit or prescription drug use or financial problems can trigger an episode in some individuals with a predisposition to the disorder.

The symptoms of mania include:

- Either an elated, happy mood or an irritable, angry unpleasant mood
- Increased activity or energy
- More thoughts and faster thinking than normal
- Increased talking, more rapid speech than normal
- Poor judgment
- Increased sexual interest or activity
- Decreased sleep and decreased need for sleep

The symptoms of depression include:

- Depressed or apathetic mood
- Decreased activity and energy
- Restlessness and irritability
- Fewer thoughts than usual and slowed thinking
- Less talking and slowed speech
- Less interest or participation and less enjoyment of activities normally enjoyed
- Decreased sexual interest and activity
- Hopeless and helpless feelings
- Feelings of guilt and worthlessness
- Pessimistic outlook
- Thoughts of suicide
- Change in appetite (either eating more or eating less)
- Change in sleep patterns (either sleeping more or sleeping less)

How is bipolar disorder treated?

There are 2 basic types of treatment for bipolar disorder:

1. Medications
2. Psychotherapy

