

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder is a serious mood disorder in which a person experiences periods of mania or hypomania. The manic episodes are characterized by periods of abnormally and persistently elevated or irritable mood, along with excessive activity. These episodes are severe enough to cause significant problems at work and at home. Hypomanic episodes involve the same symptoms, but in milder form. Common symptoms include:

- Excessive energy
- Racing thoughts
- Increased talkativeness
- Decreased need for sleep
- Increase in goal-directed activities (e.g., taking on overly ambitious work or social endeavors)
- Exaggerated self-esteem or grandiosity
- Involvement in risky behaviors (e.g., buying sprees, sexual indiscretions, foolish investments)

The basic types of bipolar disorder include:

Bipolar I disorder – Defined by manic symptoms that last at least a week or that are so severe the person requires immediate hospital care. Most will also experience major depressive episodes, too, usually lasting at least two weeks.

Bipolar II disorder – Defined by at least one major depressive episode and one hypomanic episode, but not a full, severe manic episode.

Cyclothymic disorder – Defined by at least two years of numerous periods of hypomanic symptoms and periods of depressive symptoms (but not severe enough to qualify as major depressive episodes).

Bipolar disorder is a lifelong condition, but there are effective treatments that can help individuals manage their mood swings and other symptoms. Treatment typically includes both medication and psychotherapy.