

# Bipolar Disorder - An Overview

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**Abstract:** *Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. There are four basic types of bipolar disorder; all of them involve clear changes in mood, energy, and activity levels. These moods range from periods of extremely “up,” elated, and energized behaviour (known as manic episodes) to very sad, “down,” or hopeless periods (known as depressive episodes). Less severe manic periods are known as hypomanic episodes. People with bipolar disorder experience periods of unusually intense emotion, changes in sleep patterns and activity levels, and unusual behaviours. These distinct periods are called “mood episodes.” Mood episodes are drastically different from the moods and behaviours that are typical for the person. Extreme changes in energy, activity, and sleep go along with mood episodes. Proper diagnosis and treatment help people with bipolar disorder lead healthy and productive lives. Medications generally used to treat bipolar disorder include mood stabilizers, atypical antipsychotics and antidepressants.*

**Keywords:** Bipolar disorder, Manic episodes, Depressive episodes, and Mood episodes

## 1. Introduction

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks<sup>1</sup>. The concept of **bipolar** disorder is surprisingly modern. The terms used for the **bipolar** extremes, 'melancholy' (depression) and 'mania' both have their origins in Ancient Greek. 'Melancholy' derives from melas 'black' and chole 'bile', because Hippocrates thought that depression resulted from an excess of black bile<sup>2</sup>.

Borderline personality has many symptoms and diagnosis criteria that “overlap” with other mental illnesses. The disorders that share commonalities with BPD include depressive disorders, bi-polar disorder, and schizophrenia, as well as non-schizophrenic psychoses and anxiety disorders. The existence of borderline personality disorder first came to the attention of psychologists in the early 1900's. Adolph Stern was the first psychoanalyst to recognize it. It began with him identifying a group of patients who had no response to classical psychoanalytical treatment around 1938. Adolph Stern described these people and their manifesting symptoms as being on the line between neurosis and psychosis, and therefore labelled them “**the borderline group.**” He was the first to coin the term “**borderline.**”<sup>4</sup>

Highlights of bipolar disorder

- 1) The characteristics and effects of bipolar disorder can vary greatly between men and women.
- 2) Women with bipolar disorder are at an increased risk of onset or relapse due to hormone fluctuations.
- 3) With proper medical treatment and symptom management, women with bipolar disorder have a favourable outlook.

### Symptoms of bipolar disorder

It's important to understand the basic characteristics of bipolar disorder. This can help you better understand how bipolar disorder affects women<sup>3</sup>. The key symptoms include:

- Mania
- Hypomania

- Depression
- Mixed mania

### Mania

Mania is a state of elevated mood. During manic episodes, you may feel very high-spirited, energetic, and creative. You may also feel irritable. You may engage in high-risk behaviors, such as substance abuse or increased sexual activity. You may spend money foolishly, make bad investments with your money, or behave in other reckless ways.

Manic episodes can last for a week or longer. If you experience either visual or auditory hallucinations or delusions, these are referred to as “psychotic features”<sup>3</sup>.

### Hypomania

Hypomania is a less severe form of mania. During hypomanic episodes, you may feel elevated moods similar to those that occur with mania. These elevated moods are less intense than manic moods, though, and have less impact on your ability to function. Women are more likely to develop hypomania than men<sup>3</sup>.

### Depression

Depression is a state of extremely low mood. During depressive episodes, you may feel intense sadness with a significant loss of energy. These episodes last at least two weeks. Because of this, depressive episodes can cause severe impairment. Women are more likely to experience depressive symptoms than men<sup>3</sup>.

### Mixed mania

In addition to separate manic and depressive episodes, people with bipolar disorder may also experience mixed mania. This is also known as a mixed episode. With a mixed episode, you may experience both manic and depressive symptoms daily for a week or longer. Women are more likely to experience mixed episodes than men<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. Risk Factors

Women with bipolar disorder are thought to be at an increased risk of onset or relapse due to hormone fluctuations. These fluctuations can be caused by:

- Menstruation
- Premenstrual syndrome and premenstrual dysphonic disorder
- Pregnancy
- Menopause

Women with bipolar disorder also have a greater likelihood of having certain other health problems along with bipolar<sup>3</sup>. These problems can include:

- Alcoholism
- eating disorders
- Medication-induced obesity
- migraine headaches
- thyroid disease

## 3. Diagnosis

### 3.1 Diagnosis of bipolar disorder

Diagnosing bipolar disorder can be very difficult, as many of its symptoms also occur with other conditions. These conditions can include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They can also include schizophrenia, especially if you have symptoms of psychosis. Diagnosis in women can also be complicated by reproductive hormones. A diagnosis typically involves a physical exam. Your doctor will also assess your medical and family history. With your permission, your doctor may also speak with family members and close friends to gather information about any abnormal behaviors. Before confirming the diagnosis, your doctor must also rule out the effects of other medications or conditions<sup>3</sup>.

### 3.2 Treatment for Bipolar Disorder

There isn't a known cure for bipolar disorder. The symptoms of the condition are highly treatable, though. Treatment is individualized based on your specific symptoms.

#### Medication

Medications are often used as initial treatment to get bipolar symptoms under control. The drugs used primarily for treatment of bipolar disorder include mood stabilizers, antipsychotics, and anticonvulsants<sup>3</sup>. The medications can cause side effects which include:

- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Weight gain

#### Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy, or talk therapy, is another treatment option. Talk therapy is used along with medication. It can help stabilize your mood, and help you adhere to your treatment plan. This form of therapy carries the least amount of risk, although talking about painful life experiences can cause emotional discomfort<sup>3</sup>.

#### Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is an additional option for treating bipolar disorder. ECT involves the use of electrical stimulation to induce a seizure in the brain. ECT has been shown to be an effective treatment option for severe depression and manic episodes, although how and why it works is still unclear<sup>3</sup>. The side effects that can be associated with ECT include:

- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Headache
- Permanent memory loss

### 3.3 Support options

The National Institute of Mental Health provides the following guidance if you, or someone you know, have symptoms of bipolar disorder:

- Discuss treatment options with your doctor
- Maintain a regular routine
- Get adequate sleep
- Stay on any medication that has been prescribed for your treatment
- Learn about warning signs that may alert you of an impending bipolar episode
- Expect gradual improvement in symptoms
- Get support from family and friends
- Talk with a doctor or therapist about what you may be feeling
- Join a local or online support group

### 3.4 Self-care

Proper self-care is an important part of managing this condition. Woman with bipolar disorder can practice healthy habits to better manage the disorder and improve your overall quality of life. These habits include eating nutritious foods, getting adequate rest, and reducing stress.

Borderline personality has many symptoms and diagnosis criteria that "overlap" with other mental illnesses. The disorders that share commonalities with BPD include depressive disorders, bi-polar disorder, and schizophrenia, as well as non-schizophrenic psychoses and anxiety disorders<sup>4</sup>.

Roy Grinker was the first to officially do a study on borderline personality disorder. In 1968, he published *The Borderline Syndrome*, a book that contained "the first reported results of a lengthy research program on hospitalized borderline patients whose ego-functions were studied through multiple observations on their daily behaviors<sup>4</sup>.

Men and women are diagnosed with bipolar disorder in equal numbers. However, the main symptoms of the disorder may be different between the two genders. In many cases, a woman with bipolar disorder may:

- Be diagnosed later in life, in her 20s or 30s
- Have milder episodes of mania
- Experience more depressive episodes than manic episodes
- Have four or more episodes of mania and depression in a year, which is called rapid cycling

- Experience other conditions at the same time, including thyroid disease, obesity, anxiety disorders, and migraines
  - Have a higher lifetime risk of alcohol use disorder
- Women with bipolar disorder may also relapse more often. This is believed to be caused by hormonal changes related to menstruation, pregnancy, or menopause.

### 3.5 Bipolar in Men

#### Bipolar symptoms in men

Men and women both experience common symptoms of bipolar disorder. However, men may experience symptoms differently than women. Men with bipolar disorder may:

- Be diagnosed earlier in life
- Experience more severe episodes, especially manic episodes
- Have substance abuse issues
- Act out during manic episodes

Men with bipolar disorder are less likely than women to seek medical care on their own. They're also more likely to die by suicide.

#### Types

##### Types of bipolar disorder

There are three main types of bipolar disorder: bipolar I, bipolar II, and cyclothymia.

#### Bipolar I

Bipolar I is defined by the appearance of at least one manic episode. You may experience hypomanic or major depressive episodes before and after the manic episode. This type of bipolar disorder affects men and women equally<sup>5</sup>.

#### Bipolar II

People with this type of bipolar disorder experience one major depressive episode that lasts at least two weeks. They also have at least one hypomanic episode that lasts about four days. This type of bipolar disorder is thought to be more common in women<sup>5</sup>.

#### Cyclothymia

People with cyclothymia have episodes of hypomania and depression. These symptoms are shorter and less severe than the mania and depression caused by bipolar I or bipolar II disorder<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.6 In Children

#### Bipolar disorder in children

Diagnosing bipolar disorder in children is controversial. This is largely because children don't always display the same bipolar symptoms as adults. Many bipolar symptoms that occur in children also overlap with symptoms from a range of other disorders that can occur in children, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)<sup>5</sup>.

Like adults, children with bipolar disorder experience episodes of elevated mood. They can appear very happy and show signs of excitable behavior. These periods are then followed by depression. While all children experience mood changes, changes caused by bipolar disorder are very pronounced. They're also usually more extreme than a child's typical mood swing<sup>5</sup>.

#### Manic symptoms in children

Symptoms of a child's manic episode caused by bipolar disorder can include:

- Acting very silly and feeling overly happy
- Talking fast and rapidly changing subjects
- Having trouble focusing or concentrating
- Doing risky things or experimenting with risky behaviors
- Having a very short temper that leads quickly to outbursts of anger
- Having trouble sleeping and not feeling tired after sleep loss

#### Depressive symptoms in children

Symptoms of a child's depressive episode caused by bipolar disorder can include:

- Moping around or acting very sad
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Having little energy for normal activities or showing no signs of interest in anything
- Complaining about not feeling well, including having frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Experiencing feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Eating too little or too much
- Thinking about death and possibly suicide

### 3.7 In Teens

#### Bipolar disorder in teens

The shifts in hormones, plus the life changes that come with puberty, can make even the most well-behaved teen seem a little upset or overly emotional from time to time. However, some teenage mood swings may be the result of a more serious condition, such as bipolar disorder<sup>5</sup>.

A bipolar disorder diagnosis is most common during the late teens and early adult years. For teenagers, the more common symptoms of a manic episode include:

- 1) Being very happy
- 2) "acting out" or misbehaving
- 3) Taking part in risky behaviors
- 4) Abusing substances
- 5) Thinking about sex more than usual
- 6) Becoming overly sexual or sexually active
- 7) Having trouble sleeping but not showing signs of fatigue or being tired
- 8) Having a very short temper
- 9) Having trouble staying focused, or being easily distracted

For teenagers, the more common symptoms of a depressive episode include:

- Sleeping a lot or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Feeling very sad and showing little excitability
- Withdrawing from activities and friends
- Thinking about death and suicide

## 4. Bipolar and Depression

Bipolar disorder can have two extremes: up and down. To be diagnosed with bipolar, you must experience a period of mania or hypomania. People generally feel "up" in this phase of the disorder. When you're experiencing an "up"

mood swing, you may feel highly energized and be easily excitable.

Some people with bipolar disorder will also experience a major depressive episode, or a “down” mood. When you’re experiencing a “down” mood swing, you may feel lethargic, unmotivated, and sad. However, not all people with bipolar disorder who have this symptom feel “down” enough to be labeled depressed. Bipolar disorder can cause highs and lows, but depression causes moods and emotions that are always “down”<sup>5</sup>.

## 5. Causes

### Causes of bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder is a common mental health disorder. It’s not yet clear what causes some people to develop the condition and not others. Possible causes of bipolar disorder include:

### Genetics

If your parent or sibling has bipolar disorder, you’re more likely than other people to develop the condition (see below). However, it’s important to keep in mind that most people who have bipolar disorder in their family history don’t develop it<sup>5</sup>.

### Environmental factors

These factors can include:

- Extreme stress
- Traumatic experiences
- Physical illness

### Bipolar Hereditary

Bipolar disorder can be passed from parent to child. Research has identified a strong genetic link in people with the disorder. If you have a relative with the disorder, your chances of also developing it are four to six times higher than people without a family history of the condition.

However, this doesn’t mean that everyone with relatives who have the disorder will develop it. In addition, not everyone with bipolar disorder has a family history of the disease. Still, genetics seem to play a considerable role in the incidence of bipolar disorder.

### Interpersonal and social rhythm therapy

Interpersonal and social rhythm therapy (IPSRT) focuses on regulating daily habits, such as sleeping, eating, and exercising. Balancing these everyday basics can help you manage your disorder<sup>5</sup>.

### Other treatment options

Other treatment options may include:

- Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
- Sleep medications
- Supplements
- Acupuncture

### Lifestyle changes

There are also some simple steps you can take right now to help manage your bipolar disorder:

- Keep a routine for eating and sleeping
  - Learn to recognize mood swings
  - Ask a friend or relative to support your treatment plans
  - Talk to a doctor or licensed healthcare provider
- Other lifestyle changes can also help relieve depressive symptoms caused by bipolar disorder<sup>5</sup>.

## 6. Natural Remedies

### Natural remedies for bipolar disorder

Some natural remedies may be helpful for bipolar disorder. However, it’s important not to use these remedies without first talking with your doctor. These treatments could interfere with medications you’re taking<sup>5</sup>. The following herbs and supplements may help stabilize your mood and relieve symptoms of bipolar disorder:

- **Fish oil:** the study shows that people who consume a lot of fish and fish oil are less likely to develop bipolar disease. You can eat more fish to get the oil naturally, or you can take an over-the-counter (OTC) supplement.
- **Rhodiolarosea:** The plant may be a helpful treatment for moderate depression. It may help treat depressive symptoms of bipolar disorder.
- **S-adenosylmethionine (SAME):** SAME is an amino acid supplement. The research shows it can ease symptoms of major depression and other mood disorders.
- **Minerals and Vitamins:** Several other minerals and vitamins may also reduce symptoms of bipolar disorder<sup>5</sup>.

## 7. Conclusion

Bipolar disorder is a lifelong illness. Episodes of mania and depression typically come back over time. Between episodes, many people with bipolar disorder are free of mood changes, but some people may have lingering symptoms. Long-term, continuous treatment helps to control these symptoms. Treatment helps many people even those with the most severe forms of bipolar disorder gain better control of their mood swings and other bipolar symptoms. An effective treatment plan usually includes a combination of medication and psychotherapy.

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