

## What Can I do if I Think a Loved One has Bipolar Disorder?

Talk to the person about your concerns. Ask if you can make a doctor's appointment and offer to accompany them to the visit. Here are some tips:

- ◆ Alert the doctor that this is a new problem to allow ample time for the exam.
- ◆ Have your concerns written down on a sheet of paper to ensure all areas are covered.
- ◆ Be specific as to the problems of bipolar depression, hypomania, or mania.
- ◆ Give specific details of mood swings and behaviors to the doctor
- ◆ Describe any severe mood changes, especially anger, depression, and aggressiveness.
- ◆ Describe personality changes, especially instances of elation, paranoia, illusions, and hallucinations.

The exact causes of bipolar disorder are unknown. Genetic vulnerability and life stress can trigger it, experts believe that an underlying imbalance of brain chemicals produces the symptoms.

Seek medical attention as soon as symptoms appear.

## Soundside Wellness CONSULTANTS

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 **CRISIS** hotline  
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Visit our website at:

[www.soundsidewellness.com](http://www.soundsidewellness.com)



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### For More Information:

Information about bipolar disorder treatment, and other evidence-based practices for the treatment of mental illness in the community, visit [www.mentalhealthpractices.org](http://www.mentalhealthpractices.org)

This document information was obtained from the WebMD website which can be accessed at [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com).

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### Signs, Symptoms and Treatment of Bipolar Disorder



*Information for Families  
& Other Supporters*

*For Services, Please Call:*  
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**Bipolar disorder** was formally known as manic depressive disorder or manic depression. As with any mental illness it should be taken seriously and bipolar disorder can lead to risky behavior, damaged relationships and careers, and suicidal tendencies if not treated. This disorder exhibits signs such as extreme changes in mood which is known as *mania* to *depression*. Between these mood swings a person may experience normal moods.

“Manic” behavior can be seen in the form of increased restlessness, energetic, talkative, reckless, powerful, and euphoric periods. Spending sprees or impulsive risky sex can also occur. At some point this mood can develop into irritation, confusion, anger or feeling trapped.

“Depression” is a mood opposite of the manic behavior. It can take on the form of sadness, crying, sense of worthlessness, loss of energy, loss of pleasure, or sleep problems.

Bipolar disorder is a complex disease to diagnose due to the changing pattern of highs and lows. In some people, mania or depression can last for weeks or months, even years in some. For others bipolar disorder takes the form of frequent and dramatic mood shifts.

Some people are able to get along fine as the manic periods can be very productive and things seem to be going great. The danger comes when the mania grows worse. The dramatic change can result in reckless behavior, spending large amounts of money, sexual promiscuity and sexual risks. During the depressed stage, suicide risks increase.

## Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder

### 1. Bipolar mania or hypo-mania

Symptoms can include: euphoria or irritability, excessive talk, racing thoughts, inflated self-esteem, unusual energy, less need for sleep, impulsiveness (reckless pursuit of gratification such as shopping sprees, more and sometimes promiscuous sex, fast driving).

### 2. Bipolar depression/major depression

Symptoms can include: depressed mood and low self esteem, low energy levels and apathy, sadness, loneliness, helplessness, guilt, slow speech, fatigue, and poor coordination, insomnia or oversleeping, suicidal thoughts and feelings, poor concentration, lack of interest or pleasure in usual activities.

#### Call your doctor if:

You notice some of these symptoms in a family member. Remember people with bipolar disorder often deny anything is wrong, especially in the manic phase. The symptoms may seem to be merely exaggerated versions of normal moods.

Mania and hypomania can be seductive. You might feel more energized, creative and interesting. You might be able to get extraordinary amounts of work done. Mania phases can also turn destructive. Some consequences are you can wipe out a savings account, have affairs that ruin your marriage, lose your job, and most dangerous of all can make you do things that risk your life or the lives of others. Remember to call your doctor right away if any of these sound familiar.

## Diagnosing Bipolar Disorder

Most lab tests or imaging tests are not useful in diagnosing bipolar disorder. The most important diagnostic tool may be talking openly with the doctor about mood swings, behaviors, and lifestyle habits.

### What does a doctor need to know to diagnose Bipolar Disorder?

A bipolar disorder diagnosis is made only by taking careful note of symptoms, including their severity, length, and frequency. The most telling symptoms include mood swings (going from high to low) that don't follow a set pattern.

Bipolar Disorder has a strong genetic component and family history is important to making an accurate diagnosis. Questions may focus on reasoning, memory, ability to express yourself, and ability to maintain relationships. Write down your symptoms of depression, hypomania or mania, get an in-depth family history as knowing the family history is crucial in making an accurate diagnosis. Consider taking a spouse, close family member or friend to the doctor visit as they may be more aware of a person's unusual behaviors and able to describe them to the doctor.

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