

Information About Bipolar Disorder

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Symptoms of Depressive Episode

- Feeling Sad / Empty Most Days
- Loss of Interest in Pleasurable Activities
- Weight / Appetite Changes
- Sleep Changes
- Behavioral Changes (“Can’t get Going” or “Restless and Agitated”)
- Excessive Guilt or Feeling Worthless
- Cognitive Problems (Can’t Concentrate)
- Thoughts of Death or Suicide

Symptoms of a Manic Episode

- Abnormally elevated mood
- Inflated Self-Esteem
- Grandiosity
- Decreased Need for Sleep
- Pressured Speech
- Racing Thoughts
- Distractibility
- Increased Goal-Directed Activities
- Excessive High-Risk Pleasurable Activities (e.g. Sex, Drugs, Gambling)

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Essentially this disorder is characterized by extreme shifts from the “Depressed” pole to the “Manic” pole; hence: “Bi” Polar, or “two poles”. In everyday terms Bipolar means someone feels really down and depressed and then can shift to feeling extremely energetic, active, and “up”. These incredible shifts in mood are markedly upsetting and disruptive because individuals may complicate their lives during manic

episodes. For example, they may engage in drug-use, risky sexual activities, or frivolous spending. Once the manic phase ceases, these individuals typically feel guilty and anxious about their dangerous and unhealthy behaviors—which, of course, only increases the severity of their depressive episodes.

Risk of Suicide

10%-15% of individuals with a Bipolar disorder complete suicides. Suicide is more likely during the depressive phase of the disorder.

Risk of Abuse

Drug abuse, spousal abuse, and child abuse may occur during severe manic episodes.

Prevalence

Community sample rates vary from 0.4% to 1.6% of the population.

Course

Age of onset is 20 (on average) for both men and women. It is highly likely that if an individual experiences a manic episode they will go on to experience a future manic episode. This is a recurrent condition.

Family Patterns

If you have a first-degree biological relative with Bipolar disorder, you are at an increased risk of developing the disorder. You are also likely to have an earlier age of onset for the disorder.

Other Associated Risks

Individuals with Bipolar disorder can develop psychotic symptoms (e.g. grandiose and persecutory delusions). In other words they believe they possess special powers or abilities; or they believe that they are being punished or plotted against by outside forces.

Treatment

Typically individuals are treated with medication(s) (e.g. anti-depressant with a mood stabilizer) along with psychotherapy. Therapy helps individuals better understand their disorder, process their feelings about taking medications, and learn skills to help reduce the impact of future depressive or manic episodes.

What You Need to Do

Contact your doctor or a mental health professional to undergo a Bipolar assessment. This will help you and your health professionals better understand your condition and help with treatment options. Visit www.BartonCBT.com for more information and to help you find a licensed professional in your area. You can also take a brief screening test for Bipolar Mania.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th Rev. ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.