



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

BIPOLAR DISORDER

DID YOU KNOW?

Bipolar disorder is a serious mental health problem marked by extreme mood swings that fluctuate between periods of depression, mania and normal mood. This illness is also known as “manic depressive disorder” or “manic depression.”

People with bipolar disorder have episodes of both depression and mania. **Bipolar disorder can happen to anyone** – 2.6% of American adults have the disorder each year regardless of sex,

race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. In some cases, it can take years for correct diagnosis because individuals may only see their mental health provider when they feel depressed.

Many factors increase the risk of developing bipolar disorder. Interplay between different genetic and biochemical factors of a person and their environment are believed to cause the illness.

Common symptoms of mania:

- *Excessive energy and over-activity, elated mood* – feeling high, happy, overconfident, full of energy, on top of the world, invincible
- *Need for less sleep than usual* – going days with very little sleep
- *Irritability or Distractibility*
- *Racing thoughts and rapid speech* – talking too much, too fast and changing topics often
- *Lack of inhibitions* – disregarding risks, spending money extravagantly, abusing substances or being very sexually active
- *Grandiose delusions* – experiencing a very inflated self-esteem
- *Lack of insight* – not recognizing their medical illness because their delusions seem real

Symptoms of depression:

- *Sad mood* – persistently feeling anxious, empty, pessimistic or hopeless
- *Loss of enjoyment and interest in activities once enjoyed*
- *Fatigue* – loss of energy, sleeping too much or too little
- *Loss of confidence or poor self-esteem-*
- *Feelings of guilt*
- *Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions*
- *Slowed movement*
- *Irritability* – feelings of restlessness, agitation, or tendency to cry frequently
- *Changes in eating habits/weight*
- *Thoughts of death and/or suicide* - including suicide attempts

Treatment is available for bipolar disorder. Many people with the disorder go on to live productive lives with the help of treatment. Common treatments include talk therapy, mood stabilizers and antipsychotic medications. No matter what the cause of bipolar disorder, if you or a loved one shows signs, seek help from your community behavioral healthcare center.

Visit www.thenationalcouncil.org to find a community behavioral health center near you.