**BIPOLAR DISORDER**

Bipolar disorder (formerly known as manic-depressive illness or manic depression) is a lifelong mood disorder and mental health condition that causes intense shifts in mood, energy levels, thinking patterns and behavior. These shifts can last for hours, days, weeks or months and interrupt your ability to carry out day-to-day tasks.

**Manic episodes**

A key feature of bipolar I disorder is manic episodes. To meet the criteria for bipolar I disorder, you must have had at least one manic episode in your life for at least a week with or without ever experiencing a depressive episode.

Mania is a condition in which you have a period of abnormally elevated or irritable mood, as well as extreme changes in emotions, thoughts, energy, talkativeness and activity level. This highly energized level of physical and mental activity and behavior is a change from your usual self and is noticeable by others.

People who are in manic states may indulge in activities that cause them physical, social or financial harm, such as suddenly spending or gambling extreme amounts of money or driving recklessly. They also occasionally develop psychotic symptoms, such as delusions and hallucinations, which can cause difficulties in distinguishing bipolar disorder from other disorders such as schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder.

People with certain types of bipolar such as bipolar II disorder experience hypomania, which is a less severe form of mania. It doesn’t last as long as manic episodes and it doesn’t interfere with daily functioning as much.

**Depressive episodes**

During a depressive episode, you experience a low or depressed mood and/or loss of interest in most activities, as well as many other symptoms of depression, such as:

1. Tiredness.
2. Changes in appetite.
3. Feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.

**What are the types of bipolar disorder?**

There are four types of bipolar disorder, including:

**Bipolar I disorder:** People with bipolar I disorder have experienced one or more episodes of mania. Most people with bipolar I will have episodes of both mania and depression, but an episode of depression isn’t necessary for a diagnosis. The depressive episodes usually last at least two weeks. To be diagnosed with bipolar I, your manic episodes must last at least seven days or be so severe that you need hospitalization. People with bipolar I can also experience mixed states (episodes of both manic and depressive symptoms).

**Bipolar II disorder**: People with bipolar II experience depressive episodes and hypomanic episodes. But they never experience a full manic episode that’s characteristic of bipolar I disorder. While hypomania is less impairing than mania, bipolar II disorder is often more debilitating than bipolar I disorder due to chronic depression being more common in bipolar II.

**Cyclothymic disorder (cyclothymia):** People with cyclothymic disorder have a chronically unstable mood state. They experience hypomania and mild depression for at least two years. People with cyclothymia may have brief periods of normal mood (euthymia), but these periods last fewer than eight weeks.

**Signs and symptoms of manic episodes**

Some people with bipolar disorder will have episodes of mania or hypomania many times throughout their life; others may experience them only rarely.

Signs and symptoms of a manic episode include:

1. Excessive happiness, hopefulness and excitement.
2. Sudden and severe changes in mood, such as going from being joyful to being angry and hostile.
3. Restlessness.
4. Rapid speech and racing thoughts.
5. Increased energy and less need for sleep.
6. Increased impulsivity and poor judgment, such as suddenly quitting your job.
7. Making grand and unattainable plans.
8. Reckless and risk-taking behavior, such as drug and alcohol misuse and having unsafe or unprotected sex.
9. Feeling like you’re unusually important, talented or powerful.
10. Psychosis — experiencing hallucinations and delusions (in the most severe manic episodes).

Most of the time, people experiencing a manic episode are unaware of the negative consequences of their actions. With bipolar disorder, suicide is an ever-present danger — some people become suicidal in manic episodes, not just depressive episodes.

If a person is having an intense manic episode, especially if they’re experiencing hallucinations and delusions, they may need to be hospitalized to protect themselves and others from possible harm.

**Signs and symptoms of hypomania**

Some people with bipolar disorder have milder manic-like symptoms. This is called hypomania. With hypomania, you may feel very good and find that you can get a lot done. People with hypomania can often function well in social situations or at work.

You may not feel like anything is wrong during a hypomanic episode. But your family and friends may notice your mood swings and activity level changes and think that they’re unusual for you. After hypomania, you might experience severe depression.

Signs and symptoms of depressive episodes

The symptoms of depressive episodes in bipolar disorder are the same as those of major depression. They include:

1. Overwhelming sadness.
2. Low energy and fatigue.
3. Lack of motivation.
4. Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.
5. Loss of enjoyment of things that were once pleasurable for you.
6. Difficulty concentrating and making decisions.
7. Uncontrollable crying.
8. Irritability.
9. Increased need for sleep.
10. Insomnia or excessive sleep.
11. A change in appetite, causing weight loss or gain.
12. Thoughts of death or suicide (suicidal ideation).