



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Cyclothymic disorder

URL of this page: //medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001550.htm

## Cyclothymic disorder

Cyclothymic disorder is a mental disorder. It is a mild form of bipolar disorder (manic depressive illness), in which a person has mood swings over a period of years that go from mild depression to emotional highs.

### Causes

The causes of cyclothymic disorder are unknown. Major depression, bipolar disorder, and cyclothymia often occur together in families. This suggests that these mood disorders share similar causes.

Cyclothymia usually begins early in life. Men and women are equally affected.

### Symptoms

Symptoms may include any of the following:

- Periods (episodes) of extreme happiness and high activity or energy (hypomanic symptoms), or low mood, activity, or energy (depressive symptoms) for at least 2 years (1 or more years in children and adolescents).
- These mood swings are less severe than with bipolar disorder or major depression.
- Ongoing symptoms, with no more than 2 symptom-free months in a row.

### Exams and Tests

The diagnosis is usually based on your mood history. Your health care provider may order blood and urine tests to check for medical causes of mood swings.

### Treatment

Treatments for this disorder include mood-stabilizing medicine, antidepressants, talk therapy, or some combination of these three treatments.

Some of the more commonly used mood stabilizers are lithium and antiseizure medicines.

Compared with bipolar disorder, some people with cyclothymia may not respond as well to medicines.

### Support Groups

You can ease the stress of living with cyclothymic disorder by joining a support group whose members share common experiences and problems.

# **Outlook (Prognosis)**

Less than one half of people with cyclothymic disorder go on to develop bipolar disorder. In other people, cyclothymia continues as a chronic condition or disappears with time.

## **Possible Complications**

The condition can progress to bipolar disorder.

## **When to Contact a Medical Professional**

Contact a mental health professional if you or a loved one has alternating periods of depression and excitement that do not go away and that affect work, school, or social life.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org [<https://988lifeline.org>]. You can also call 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK). The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential support 24/7, anytime day or night.

You can also call 911 or the local emergency number or go to the hospital emergency room. DO NOT delay.

If someone you know has attempted suicide, call 911 or the local emergency number right away. DO NOT leave the person alone, even after you have called for help.

## **Alternative Names**

Cyclothymia; Mood disorder - cyclothymia

## **References**

American Psychiatric Association website. Cyclothymic disorder. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision* (DSM-5-TR), Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing; 2022.

Fava M, Mischoulon D, Cassano P, Papakostas GI, Stern TA. Depressive disorders. In: Stern TA, Wilens TE, Fava M, eds. *Massachusetts General Hospital Comprehensive Clinical Psychiatry*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2025:chap 28.

## **Review Date 7/17/2024**

Updated by: Fred K. Berger, MD, addiction and forensic psychiatrist, Scripps Memorial Hospital, La Jolla, CA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

**Learn how to cite this page**



A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider ([www.urac.org](http://www.urac.org)). URAC's accreditation program is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



---

National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health