

# Everybody's Mental Health Matters



## Bipolar Disorder (Manic Depression)

### What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar Disorder, once called manic depression, is characterised by intense mood swings that can sometimes last weeks or even months. Bipolar mood swings can be experienced as low mood: which includes feelings of despair and depression and high mood, which may include feelings of intense happiness and energy. There can also be a mixture of feelings, for example depression combined with the agitation of a high mood.

### Common Symptoms

These can vary depending on if the person is experiencing a depressive or manic episode:

#### Depressive:

- Loss of interest in other people, work or hobbies
- Feelings of guilt or low self worth
- Disturbed sleep or appetite
- Low energy and poor concentration
- Suicidal thoughts
- Loss of interest in sex
- Sleep problems

#### Mania:

- Very happy, excited and energetic
- Irritated with other people who don't share your optimistic outlook
- Feeling more important than usual
- Full of new and exciting ideas
- Moving quickly from one idea to another
- Unable or unwilling to sleep
- More interested in sex
- Making plans that are grandiose and unrealistic
- Talking very quickly - other people may find it hard to follow your conversation
- Over-familiar or recklessly critical with other people

### Psychotic Symptoms

Severe episodes of depression and mania can also lead to symptoms such as grandiose beliefs (for example the belief in special powers) and hearing voices; or at the other scale feelings of extreme guilt, or feelings that you don't exist.

### Self Help

- Eating a well balanced diet
- Drink unsweetened fluids regularly to keep salts and fluids in the body balanced
- Learning to recognise things that might trigger changes in mood

### Common Treatments

Medication in the form of mood stabilisers are the most common form of treatment for bi-polar disorder and Lithium is one of the most commonly recognised medications for bi-polar.

### Further Information

More detailed information on this condition can be found at:

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/>

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation.aspx>

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