

A close-up photograph of a young Black man and woman smiling and embracing each other outdoors. The man is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a teal t-shirt. They are both looking towards the right of the frame with joyful expressions. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a park or natural setting.

LIVING WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER

holding your hand through health

adcock ingram 
generics

WHAT IS BIPOLAR DISORDER?

Bipolar disorder is a mental health disorder¹ that causes a sudden, dramatic shift in the extremes of emotions,² lasting for at least 1-2 weeks and ranging from euphoric,³ impulsive¹ feelings to feeling extremely sad or hopeless.^{1,4} Bipolar disorder is typically diagnosed in teenagers and young adults, aged 20 years or older, but is sometimes seen in younger children.³

The symptoms of bipolar disorder are as follows:^{1,2,3,4}

Mania



- Feelings of superiority, grandiosity and inflated self-esteem
- High energy levels
- Increased activity
- Racing thoughts
- Talking excessively and very fast about a lot of different things
- Short attention span
- Decreased need for sleep
- Inappropriate laughing or joking
- Irritable and agitated or getting into a lot of arguments
- Inappropriate spending sprees or sexual activity
- Think they can do a lot of things, start projects and do not complete any

Depression



- Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
- Feeling tired with very little energy
- Decreased activity levels
- Feeling sluggish with no interest and not enjoying anything
- Feeling depressed, sad and worried
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions, being forgetful
- Having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping too much
- Eating too little or too much with resultant weight loss (without dieting) or weight gain
- Feeling restless or irritated
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide or planning or attempting suicide

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These feelings may change from feeling very good to feeling really sad or depressed a few times a year or as often as several times a week.³ Sometimes extended periods where no extreme emotions are experienced can occur between these episodes of extreme emotion.^{3,4} Sometimes the symptoms of mania and depression can occur at the same time and those are called 'mixed episodes'.⁴

People with bipolar disorder often suffer from other conditions such as anxiety disorders, attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other physical health problems such as thyroid problems, heart conditions or obesity^{3,4}

What causes bipolar disorder?

The exact cause of bipolar disorder is unknown.¹ It is believed that bipolar disorder is not due to a single cause, but instead, several factors appear to play a role.⁴

These contributing factors include:

- **Genetics** – research suggests that people with certain genes are at higher risk of developing bipolar disorder⁴
- **Family history** – children with a parent or sibling who has bipolar disorder are at higher risk of developing bipolar disorder. This is true for about 1 out of 7 children who have one parent with bipolar disorder^{2,4}
- **Biological differences** – some studies in people with bipolar disorder have shown that there are physical differences in the brain and in the way that the brain functions^{3,4}

Some factors may increase the risk of developing bipolar disorder or act as a trigger for the first episode.³ These include:

- Periods of high stress³
- Drug or alcohol abuse³
- Major life changes such as the death of a loved one, losing a job or other traumatic experiences³
- Changes in the seasons²

What is the impact of bipolar disorder?

Untreated bipolar disorder can have an impact on several aspects of the affected person's life including:³

- Relationships with other people
- Marital and family relationships
- Poor performance at school or work
- Frequent absences from school or work
- Financial problems
- Legal problems
- Problems with alcohol and drug abuse

People with bipolar disorder often feel lonely and isolated and are at higher risk of committing or trying to commit suicide.^{1,3}

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In addition to adhering to your treatment, you can also adapt your lifestyle to improve your condition by implementing some or all of the following:

- Maintain a stable sleeping pattern – go to bed around the same time and get up at the same time each morning²



- Maintain a regular pattern of daily activity – manage your time and energy well without driving yourself too hard. Create a daily planning calendar²

- Avoid using alcohol or illicit drugs to try to feel better²



- Improve your diet and avoid caffeine, sugar and heavily-salted food²

- Exercise and take good care of yourself²

- Surround yourself with simple things that make you feel good such as pets, music and hobbies²



- Do exercises to help you relax, reduce stress and focus. Keep your life as calm and peaceful as possible²



- Spend time with positive people and participate in fun, creative activities²



- Allow some time in the outdoors where you can be exposed to light²

- Record your thoughts and feelings in a journal – this will help identify any changes in your mood and will also assist your doctor²



- Join a support group or spend time talking to a friend²

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