

# Bipolar Disorder

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## What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar Disorder is a serious mental illness and has many symptoms. A person's mood alternates between feeling very up (mania) and feeling very low (depression). A mood swing can last for several days, weeks or even months.

More than 2.5 million Americans have Bipolar Disorder. It affects people of all races and backgrounds.\*

Bipolar Disorder is a medical problem just like diabetes or heart disease. There are natural or internal causes for bipolar disorder. It is treatable.

## Signs of a Possible Problem

- Feeling jumpy or wired
- Talking really fast about a lot of different things
- Being agitated or irritable
- Having trouble relaxing or sleeping
- Thinking they can do a lot of things at once and more activity than usual
- Feeling worried, empty or tired
- Having trouble concentrating
- Loss of interest in fun activities and becoming less active
- Having trouble sleeping
- Thinking about death or suicide

## Getting Help

See your primary care provider first.

## Who Offers Services to Treat Bipolar Disorder?

**Your doctor:** Can treat you or refer you to an expert.

**Psychiatrist:** Specialize in treating mental health concerns and can give medicine.



**Therapists:** Trained in psychotherapy and mental health testing. They can't give medicine. Some types are Psychologists, Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT).

**Nurse practitioners:** Can be experts in behavioral health and can give medicine in most states.

## Children & Teens Can Have Bipolar Disorder Too

Anyone can have Bipolar Disorder, including children and teens. The illness usually lasts a lifetime. Children and teens with Bipolar Disorder should get treatment. With help, they can manage their symptoms and lead successful lives.

## Your First Appointment: What to Expect

Your provider will want to get to know you. They will want to know the problems you want to work on. They may ask about your family background. They want to help you find strengths and skills that will help you recover.

Providers are bound by strict rules to keep your information private. What you tell your provider helps them create the right treatment plan for you.

## Your Role in Treatment

A treatment program is made by you and your provider, and may include:

- Medicine
- Personal or Family Therapy
- Support from friends, family, and peers.
- Talking with other providers

Sometimes more intense services may be needed to reach your wellness goals.

## Ways to Help Yourself Feel Better

- Talk to your doctor
- Meet with a mental health professional
- Keep all your appointments
- Take your medication at the same time every day
- Avoid drugs and alcohol
- Plan to deal with stress before it happens
- Join a support group
- Eat healthy
- Exercise regularly

## Resources

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**Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance**

[www.dbsalliance.org](http://www.dbsalliance.org)

**BP magazine**

[www.bphope.com](http://www.bphope.com)

**National Institute of Mental Health**

[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

**National Alliance for Mental Illness**

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) (1-800-950-6264)

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)**

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration (SAMHSA)**

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

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