

Bipolar disorder can cause problems if it's not treated.

- People can have problems with family, friends, work or school.
- People may spend too much money. They may use alcohol or other drugs.
- People may think about killing themselves.

It can be treated.

- Talk therapy can help.
- Medicines can help.
- Family or friends can watch for signs of mood changes and take the person to the doctor.



My son was having trouble with moods.
We went to see his doctor.

These things can help.

- Have a routine. Go to bed and wake up at about the same time every day.
- Be active.
- Manage stress.
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs.
- Keep taking your medicines, even when you feel good.

To Learn More

National Institute of Mental Health
1-800-421-4211
www.nimh.nih.gov

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
1-800-826-3632
www.dbsalliance.org

Professional models were used in all photographs.

This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care.

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What Is Bipolar Disorder?



Everyone has moods.

It's normal to feel happy, sad and angry at times. But some people have serious mood changes. This is called bipolar disorder (bi-POLE-er dis-OR-der).

The illness affects how a person feels, thinks and acts.

- It causes strong “highs” and “lows.” The highs are called **mania** (MAY-nee-ah). The lows are called **depression** (dee-PRES-shun).
- Most people with the illness go back and forth between these highs and lows.
- Highs and lows can last for days, months or even years. In between, the person may have normal moods.
- The illness is serious. It can cause people to hurt themselves.

**Bipolar disorder is an illness.
It's not something you
can fix on your own.**

What causes it?

- Chemicals in the brain affect moods and feelings.
- People with the disorder may have low levels of certain brain chemicals.
- It tends to run in families.
- Both men and women can have it.
- It usually starts in the late teens or early 20s. But it can happen at any age.



My uncle and father both had mood problems. Could it happen to me?

Signs can be mild or serious.

Signs of Mania

Check a box if you've ever had this sign every day for 1 week or more.

- You feel happier than usual.
- You get upset easily, shout or argue.
- You need less sleep than usual.
- You talk faster than usual.
- You can't slow down your thoughts.
- You have trouble thinking.
- You do risky things. Have too much sex. Use alcohol or other drugs. Spend too much money.

Signs of Depression

Check a box if you've ever had this sign every day for 2 weeks or more.

- You feel sad or get upset easily.
- You feel tired or have trouble sleeping.
- You eat too much or not enough.
- You forget things, have trouble thinking or can't make decisions.
- You feel slowed down or restless.
- You feel worthless or hopeless.
- You think about killing yourself.

If you checked several boxes in these lists, see your doctor. Bipolar disorder can be treated. People can feel better.