

Bipolar disorder

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder may be referred to as manic depression or bipolar affective disorder. It is a relatively common condition, with around 1 person in 100 being diagnosed as having bipolar disorder. No one knows exactly what causes bipolar disorder. Researchers suggest that a combination of different factors, including physical, environmental and social, increase your chance of developing the condition. These may include, childhood trauma, stressful life events, brain chemistry and genetic inheritance (though a specific gene has not been identified).

Both men and women, and people from all backgrounds can get it. If you have bipolar disorder, you will have periods or episodes of depression and mania.

Both extremes of bipolar disorder have other symptoms associated with them. Unlike simple mood swings, each extreme episode can last for several weeks or longer. The high and low phases of the illness can be so extreme that they interfere with your daily life.

Symptoms

The main symptoms of bipolar disorder are mood swings. The mood swings range from extreme happiness (mania) to extreme sadness (depression). The pattern of mood swings in bipolar disorder varies widely between individuals.

Some people have only a couple of bipolar episodes in their lifetime and are stable in between, while others may experience many episodes.

Symptoms of depression may include:

- feeling sad and hopeless
- lack of energy
- finding it difficult to concentrate and remember things
- loss of interest in everyday activities
- feelings of emptiness or worthlessness
- feelings of guilt and despair
- feeling pessimistic about everything
- self-doubt
- difficulty sleeping and waking up early
- suicidal thoughts

Symptoms of mania may include:

- feeling extremely happy, elated or euphoric
- talking very quickly
- feeling full of energy
- feeling full of self-importance
- feeling full of great new ideas and having important plans
- being easily distracted
- being easily irritated or agitated
- not sleeping
- not eating
- doing lots of pleasurable things which often have disastrous consequences, such as spending a lot of money which you cannot afford

If you have bipolar disorder, you may be unaware that you are having a manic phase and, after it is over, you may be shocked at your behaviour. However, at the time, you may think others are being very negative or unhelpful. Some people with bipolar disorder have more frequent and severe episodes than others.

During episodes of mania and depression, you may experience strange sensations, such as seeing, hearing or smelling things that are not there. You may also believe things that seem irrational to other people. This is known as psychosis or a psychotic episode.

Treatment

The majority of people with bipolar disorder can be treated using a combination of approaches. These include:

- medicines to prevent episodes of mania, hypomania and depression; these are called mood stabilisers and are taken every day, long-term
- medicines to treat the main symptoms of depression and mania when they occur
- learning to recognise things that trigger an episode of depression or mania
- learning to recognise the signs of an approaching episode

There are things that you can do to help manage the condition effectively, including:

- avoiding stressful situations which may trigger an episode of mania or depression
- avoiding drinking too much alcohol or taking recreational drugs, as this may trigger an episode of mania
- if prescribed a mood stabiliser medicine, ensuring that you take it regularly, as stopping suddenly can trigger an episode of mania or depression

- telling you doctor straight away if you get any side effects from medication that you have been prescribed.

The help and support of your family and friends can be invaluable. If they know that you have the condition, and understand what it is about, they will be able to recognise when your behaviour is out of character and encourage you to get help.

Local Help and Advice

Read more about [local Mental health support services](#) on InformationNOW.

[Tyneside and Northumberland Mind](#) runs a Safe Space Service MEA House. It is an informal group that offers essential support to adults who are experiencing problems with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. The aim of the service is to provide a supportive peer group where people can reduce isolation, build confidence, improve their wellbeing and take positive steps towards their recovery. They also have counselling, wellbeing sessions and a telephone helpline open 7 days a week.

[Mind](#) have some useful and practical [online self help information](#). They also have 2 telephone helplines. Info Line for general information and signposting on mental health issues. Legal Line for information and advice on mental health related law

[ReCoCo: The Recovery College](#) run peer-led support groups, and free educational and creative courses, for anyone who would find them helpful in their recovery from mental illness, substance misuse, trauma or distress.

[Tyneside Women's Health](#) promotes the positive mental health and emotional well-being of women through various groups and activities.

[Newcastle Libraries](#) 'Reading Well Books on Prescription' scheme have a number of books available to borrow to help you manage your mental wellbeing. The titles chosen deal with issues such as anger, anxiety, fear, panic, worry, assertiveness, confidence, self-esteem, depression, eating disorders, fatigue and pain.

Other Useful Information

- [The Secret Life of Manic Depression](#) BBC guide
- [SANE](#) has a helpline
- [Healthtalk.org](#) offers information on experiences that others have had
- [Understanding bipolar disorder](#) resources
- [Bipolar Disorder](#) SANE factsheet
- [NHS 111](#) You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

Please note – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact [**NHS 111**](#). In an emergency, dial **999**.

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Useful Organisations

Tyneside Womens Health

Email: enquiries@tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk

Website: www.tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 477 7898

Address: Wilfred Street, NE6 1JQ

Tyneside and Northumberland Mind

Email: admin@tynesidemind.org.uk

Website: www.tynesidemind.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 477 4545

Address: Tyneside and Northumberland Mind, NE16UF

British Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists

Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk

Website: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/>

Telephone: 0191 477 4545

Address: BACP Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists, LE17 4HB

EveryTurn Mental Health

Email: enquiries@everyturn.org

Website: <https://www.everyturn.org/>

Telephone: 0191 217 0377

Address: Everyturn Mental Health, NE13 9BA

SANE

Email: support@sane.org.uk

Website: www.sane.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 217 0377

Address: St. Mark's Studios, N7 8QJ

healthtalk.org

Email: info@healthtalkonline.org

Website: www.healthtalk.org

Telephone: 0191 217 0377

NHS 111

Website: www.nhs.uk/111

Telephone: 0191 217 0377

ReCoCo: The Recovery College Collective

Email: info@recoverycoco.com

Website: <http://www.recoverycoco.com/>

Telephone: 0191 261 0948

Address: 1 Carliol Square, NE1 6UF

Adult Social CarePoint at Newcastle City Council

Email: ASCP@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/AdultSocialCare>

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Adult Social CarePoint Newcastle City Council, NE4 9LU

Mental Health Matters

Email: info@mhmm.org.uk

Website: www.mhmm.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 273 4614

Address: MHM Central Office, Avalon House, SR5 3XJ

A Time 2 Talk

Email: atime2talk@hotmail.com

Website: <http://www.atime2talk.co.uk/>

Telephone: 07538 891 325

Address: A Time 2 Talk, NE3 1PH

Mind UK

Email: info@mind.org.uk

Website: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Telephone: 07538 891 325

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