

Bipolar Manic Depression

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Bipolar or Manic Depression is like being on a rollercoaster of highs and lows every day of your life. The repercussions on your mood, behavior, thinking process and energy levels can be severe and threaten relationships, jobs, school and all areas of your lifestyle.

With Bipolar depression, you don't simply get in a bad or irritable mood once in a while – both highs and lows are extreme. This type of depression can be treated, but most people don't recognize the symptoms before the situation becomes worse.

During these manic occurrences, a person may feel he can conquer the world and quit a job he doesn't particularly enjoy, run up credit cards to the max and get by on very little sleep.

The “downside” of bipolar depression may cause periods of dark, deep thoughts filled with self-loathing and hopelessness because of the impulsive actions he took when he was on the upside of the rollercoaster.

There is help for bipolar disorder, but it won't happen unless you know which symptoms to look for and how to seek treatment. This report explains the possible causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatments involved in this debilitating disorder so you can seek help based on reliable information.

Causes of Bipolar Manic Depression

Although not understood completely, bipolar depression is thought to be hereditary. It usually begins during the teen years or early adulthood and the symptoms can be mystifying to anyone who experiences it.

Bipolar depression is often misdiagnosed because the symptoms are so like other disorders. A misdiagnosis can mean ongoing suffering to the person who has this disorder.

When the diagnosis is correct, treatment can result in a more normal and satisfying life. Even though bipolar depression is widely thought to be inherited, not everyone down the familial line develops the disorder, so genes may not be the only cause.

Brain imaging has been performed on those who have been diagnosed with bipolar depression and scientists notice actual physical differences in those with the disorder. Research also indicates that improper thyroid function, neurotransmitter issues, circadian rhythm problems and high levels of cortisol (stress hormone) may also be among the causes of bipolar depression instances.

Triggers that lead to the development of the disorder may include psychological and environmental factors, but sometimes there's no trigger at all that can point to the episodes of low- or high-level depression.

Certain medications may also be a trigger to manic episodes of depression. Meds for thyroid disorders, over-the-counter cold and flu, appetite suppressants and corticosteroids are some of the suspected triggers and caffeine can be a culprit.

Constant stress or situational events may trigger the disorder – especially those with genetic predisposition. Changes in lifestyle such as moving, marriage, a new job or getting fired and loss of a loved one can be a catalyst to manic episodes.

Another possible cause is sleep deprivation. Skipping sleep – even for a few hours of work or pleasure can cause a serious onset of the disorder. Seasonal changes sometimes trigger high or manic episodes in the summer while fall, spring and winter tend to trigger depressive times.

Those who suffer from bipolar disorder and also are prone to substance abuse can bring on episodes which interfere negatively with the disorder. Alcohol and tranquilizers may also be triggers for depression.

Recognizing the Symptoms of Bipolar Manic Depression

Symptoms of bipolar manic depression often mimic the symptoms of other forms of depression, making it more difficult to diagnose. Also, the disorder can look different in every person, varying in the frequency of episodes, severity of the episodes and the pattern of occurrences.

While some tend to experience more high or manic episodes and others more depression, it's also common to alternate equally between the highs and lows. Some may also experience many mood occurrences, while others only experience a few during his or her lifetime.

Four types of mood episodes play a part in bipolar depression – mania, hypomania, depression and mixed. During manic phases, it's common to experience high energy levels, a sense of euphoria and high creativity. The invincibility and grandiose feelings during the manic phase can easily spring out of control.

This period of recklessness may cause the person to gamble away life savings, have affairs or experience wild sexual activity and become extremely angry aggressive and irritable. Delusions or hearing voices are also common during the manic phase.

Hypomania symptoms usually involve the person feeling very energetic and possibly euphoric. Even though the symptoms seem to be agreeable, a person in this state may make bad decisions about his career or relationships and most of the time a period of depression occurs following the manic phase.

A mixed episode of bipolar disorder could feature mania/hypomania and symptoms of depression. A mixed episode includes depression combined with symptoms such as anger, inability to think rationally, insomnia, high anxiety and more. This combination of high energy and low mood makes for a particularly high risk of suicide.

During the bipolar depression phase a person may become extremely irritable, restless, unpredictable and experience feelings of guilt. Some

even loss touch with reality and lose the ability to function in a job or socially.

While in the throes of a mixed mood of bipolar depression the person may have manic and depressive symptoms. Confused and racing thoughts, lack of sleep, high agitation, extreme irritability, anxiety and a mixture of high and low energy tends to produce a high risk of suicide.

Diagnosis and Treatments for Bipolar Manic Depression

Your doctor will likely request a physical exam first if he suspects you have bipolar manic depression. Lab tests may also be performed to discover if there's anything going on physically that could cause the symptoms.

Next, you'll likely get a psychiatric exam with a psychiatrist who can speak to you about your behavior and go through questionnaires and other methods to provide information needed to make an assessment.

Before a final assessment can be provided, you'll likely be asked to keep a record of your moods and other issues which can help in finding the proper diagnosis and getting you on the correct treatment plan.

When the criteria for a diagnosis have been met, the doctor will make an assessment based on information provided by the American Psychiatric Association's manual of mental disorders.

If you suspect that a child or teen may be suffering from bipolar disorder, the doctor will use the same criterion that's used for adults, but the symptoms may happen in different patterns and be more difficult to diagnose. A child psychiatrist may be better able to help diagnose a child's possibility of the disorder.

Treatment for bipolar manic disorder will likely involve a combination of medications and "talk therapy" (psychotherapy). Bipolar disorder will last your entire life and while you may feel perfectly normal at times, it's important that you continue treatment in case the symptoms return.

Medications may include antidepressants, mood stabilizers and/or atypical antipsychotics and anti-anxiety meds. You may need to try several or combinations of meds before you find one that works. Be sure you talk to your doctor about any side effects you may experience.

Psychotherapy is another form of treatment for bipolar disorder that your doctor will likely recommend. Talk therapy is important because it takes into consideration the entire family and is likely to include CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy), Social rhythm and interpersonal therapy and psychoeducation to help you learn about the disorder.

Sleep medications may also be recommended. ECT (Electroconvulsive) therapy is usually recommended for those with especially severe cases of bipolar disorder and when side effects of medications may be dangerous.

If you have continuing problems with alcohol or drugs, you may be counseled to receive substance abuse treatments. Day treatment programs may be recommended to provide you with constant support and counseling until you can function normally.

More critical episodes of bipolar depression may require hospitalization – especially if you have thoughts of suicide or become psychotic. The hospital can stabilize your mood swings and keep you safe while you get the symptoms under control.

A treatment team consisting of a psychiatrist specializing in treating bipolar and other depressive disorders, a medical doctor specializing in diagnosis and treatment of mental conditions, a social worker and a psychiatric nurse.

Treatments for children or teens should be based on the individuals suffering from the disorder. Treatment may include prescribed medications, psychoeducation to help both the patient and parent learn about behavior patterns of the condition and psychotherapy to help the teen or child manage their condition.

Tips for Managing Bipolar Manic Depression

One of the most important tips for managing a diagnosis of bipolar depression is never to stop taking meds or skip therapy sessions. Ongoing medical care to manage this disorder is imperative.

Be forthcoming and honest with your medical providers and let them know of any changes in your condition or of any alternative methods you'd like to try. Know the dangers of your disorder including suicidal thoughts and interactions with other medications or supplements you might be taking.

Many who have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder are counseled to keep a life chart which will be helpful to your doctor by recording your mood swings, daily symptoms, sleep patterns and events in your life.

Although medication is an essential treatment for this disorder, you can help minimize the symptoms by getting enough sleep, adhering to a healthy diet, keeping stress at bay, regular exercise and by keeping supportive people close in your life.

Educate yourself about the disorder so you can successfully manage the symptoms. Remember that your lifestyle and daily choices will have a huge impact on your mood swings.

Suicidal thoughts are more prevalent in people with consistent depressive episodes. If you have thoughts of suicide, seek help immediately. Warning signs include thinking about suicide, feelings of worthlessness or helplessness, living recklessly or considering ways to commit suicide.

Best Natural Remedies for Bipolar Manic Depression

Supplements are sometimes effective in treating various types of depressive disorders, but there hasn't been a lot of research done on how natural or herbal supplements affect bipolar manic depression.

Stress is a problem for people with bipolar depressive disorder. One supplement found to help stress and relieve depressive symptoms is Rhodiola – an herb that is known to have calming effects on people suffering from depression.

While rhodiola doesn't help ease depressive symptoms as much as an antidepressant, it has fewer side effects than prescription meds, it may help in the relaxation process to those who can't become calm enough to sleep.

SAMe is a natural coenzyme that your body produces. Research indicates that it helps to reduce symptoms in some people with major types of depressive disorders. A serious caution is that SAMe might also provoke manic episodes, so take it only with supervision of a healthcare provider.

Meditation in the form of supervised cognitive therapy may help reduce symptoms of major depressive disorders. Light therapy may also be effective in helping disrupted circadian rhythms – a disorder of the internal biological clock.

The anti-inflammatory benefits of Omega-3 fatty acids may help regulate the moods of people with bipolar depressive disorder and St. John's Wort is also found to be effective in managing mood swings.

Interpersonal and social rhythm therapy is a technique to help those with bipolar depression maintain a regular schedule of sleep, diet and exercise and functioning on a daily basis.

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy works to improve bipolar symptoms by helping you remember bad or traumatic happenings in your life that may have helped trigger the disorder.

Inform your doctor about any supplements, alternative treatments or over-the-counter medications you're taking and of course make a list of any prescription drugs. Any of these types of treatments may cause troublesome or dangerous side effects.

Living with bipolar disorder may at times make you angry or confused about the mood swings and may leave your family and friends with a wide range of emotions. It may be helpful to engage in one or more counseling sessions together so they can better understand this sometimes debilitating disorder



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