



Caring for your Loved One with BIPOLAR DISORDER

Bipolar Disorder is a serious mental health condition involving mixed and alternating depressive and manic episodes that disrupt a sufferer's mood, energy levels, ability to function, and wellbeing. It requires ongoing treatment and support. The three main types are distinguished by symptom severity.

3 Main Types of Bipolar Disorder:



BIPOLAR I DISORDER
Sufferer experiences mixed episodes of mania and depression. Average onset age is 12yo-24yo.



BIPOLAR II DISORDER
Sufferer experiences hypomania and major depressive episodes. More prevalent in older patients.



CYCLOTHYMIC DISORDER
Sufferer experiences constant mood changes without severe mood peaks and troughs; least common.

Related Symptoms

Depressive...

- increased need for sleep
- decreased appetite
- sadness
- hopelessness
- anhedonia (unable to feel happy)

Other...

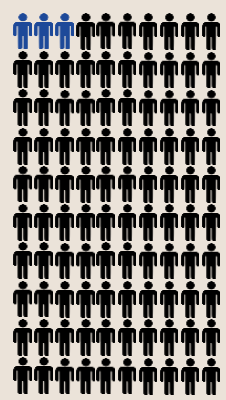
- anxiety
- lack of concentration
- impaired decision-making
- suicidal thoughts or behaviours
- substance abuse
- relationship problems
- work-related problems



Manic...

- decreased need for sleep
- increased energy and erratic activity
- grandiosity
- racing thoughts
- irritability and restlessness
- rapid speech
- aggression
- impulsive and risky behaviour

Prevalence



2.9% of Australians 16+yo have Bipolar Disorder.

Advancements in psychological evaluation have made it easier for professionals to diagnose Bipolar Disorder due to a better understanding of risk factors and symptomology.

Receiving diagnosis can be challenging because of the lengthy and costly evaluation process; diagnosis can occur years after the first appearance of symptoms.

Early and advancing age increases risk of misdiagnosis due to children's brain functions still developing and longevity of symptoms in older patients.

Famous People with Bipolar Disorder



Winston Churchill



Catherine Zeta-Jones



Ernest Hemingway



Mariah Carey



Frank Sinatra



Florence Nightingale

Known Causes and Triggers



Biological causes

Bipolar Disorder can result from major changes in multiple biological pathways affecting neurotransmitters, such as the immune, endocrine and metabolic mechanisms. **Neurochemistry** plays a central role, and **Serotonin deficiency** and **cortisol excess** can contribute to its onset.



Genetic causes

Mutation of **specific chromosomes** is associated with Bipolar Disorder onset. **Paternal parents' advanced age** at conception, **maternal smoking**, and **influenza** during pregnancy is linked to cell mutations associated with Bipolar Disorder onset.



Environmental triggers

While not considered a cause of Bipolar Disorder, **stressful life events** such as childhood abuse, severe shocks, and family, work or financial problems can trigger Bipolar Disorder symptoms in individuals with a predisposition to it. This predisposition is associated with Bipolar Disorder's biological and genetic causes.

How to Support Your Loved One with Bipolar Disorder (BD)

Practice Self-Care



Accept that BD is incurable but can be managed to improve quality of life.

Know your emotions are valid.

Eat healthy, **sleep** sufficiently and **receive** therapy.

Encourage Treatment



If your loved one with BD needs expert help, **encourage** them to seek medication and/or treatment (e.g. CBT) to manage symptoms. Help **organise** appointments, **accompany** them and **monitor** progress.

Avoid Triggers



Identify and **eliminate** triggers to manic and depressive episodes and promote a **calm** family environment. Adjust your **communication** style (soothing, calm) so your loved one is receptive to help.

Join Online Support Groups



Online support groups offer **anonymity**, a sense of **belonging**, and **acceptance**. Asynchronous groups can be private or open, and members converse via text. Synchronous groups include use of a camera.

For additional support:

Black Dog Institute
<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/bipolar-disorder/help-support/>

ReachOut Australia
<https://au.reachout.com/articles/support-services-for-bipolar-disorder>

Use this QR code to contact the 3Chairs team.



Learn More

Increase or **update** your knowledge of BD (e.g. Mental Health First Aid):

- new research into causes and triggers;
- latest medication to reduce mood instability;
- new treatments and approaches.



Be Alert to Warnings

Identify and **be observant** to warning signs to an upcoming manic/depressive episode. Early intervention may reduce severity of symptoms.

Develop **action plan** to manage BD emergencies.



Receive Family Therapy

Participating in **family intervention** for all members decreases likelihood of BD relapse by increasing education of causes, triggers and management, and improving **communications** and **problem-solving** skills.



Optimise Behaviour

Exercise **patience** and **understanding**. Avoid making assumptions about their actions to reduce symptom severity. In moments of reduced sleep, encourage hobbies. Let your loved one with BD sleep when they want to.

