



Manic Depressive Illness / Bipolar Affective Disorder

Manic depressive illness or bipolar disorder is a medical condition in which people have extreme mood swings. Their mood swings have nothing to do with things going on in their lives. These swings not only affect mood, they also affect how people think, behave and function. Bipolar Disorder is a medical disorder that can be treated.

A person with bipolar disorder may show signs of depression or mania. Bipolar disorder affects approximately 1%-3% of the adult population and is equally distributed between males and females.

Signs and symptoms of depression include but are not limited to:

- Sad mood
- Preoccupation with failures or inadequacies and a loss of self-esteem
- Feelings of uselessness, hopelessness, excessive guilt
- Slowed thinking, forgetfulness, difficulty in concentrating and in making decisions
- Loss of interest in work, hobbies, people
- Social isolation
- Lethargy
- Agitation
- Changes in appetite or weight-eating too little or too much
- Oversleeping or insomnia
- Decreased sexual drive
- Suicidal thoughts

Signs and symptoms of mania include but are not limited to:

- Elevated, expansive mood
- Extreme irritability
- Rapid, unpredictable emotional changes
- Racing thoughts, flights of ideas
- Overreaction to stimuli, misinterpretation of events
- Increased interest in activities

- Overspending
- Sense of grandiosity, inflated self-esteem
- Excessive energy
- Decreased need for sleep
- Increased sexual drive, sexual indiscretions
- Poor judgment

The most commonly used forms of treatment for depression and mania are medication and psychotherapy, used alone or in combination with other treatments. Approximately one in three people with bipolar disorder will remain completely free of symptoms just by taking mood stabilizing medication. Some of the factors that determine the type of treatment are the nature of the symptoms, the severity and duration of the illness, possible precipitating causes and previous response to treatment.

Recommended reading:

- **The Bipolar Workbook: Tools for Controlling Your Mood Swings.** Basco, Monica. Guilford Publications, 2005..
- **A Brilliant Madness.** Duke, Patty & Hochman, Gloria. New York: Bantam Books, 1992.
- **A Mood Apart: Depression, Mania, and Other Afflictions of the Self.** Whybrow, Peter C., Basic Books, 1997.
- **Mood Genes: Hunting for Origins of Mania and Depression.** Barondes, Samuel W., New York: W.H. Freeman and Co, 1998.
- **An Unquiet Mind.** Jamison, Kay Redfield, New York: Random House, 1995.

Recommended websites:

- Bipolar Disorder: A Guide for Patients and Families (2004) Kahn/Keck/Perlis/Otto/Ross
<<http://psychguides.com/Bipolar%20Handout.pdf>>
- Canmat 2005 Guidelines for the Management of Patients with Bipolar Disorder
<http://www.canmat.org/resources/PDF/Bipolar_Guidelines.pdf>

The Mood Disorders Association of Ontario provides support, information and education as a complement to traditional and alternative therapies. MDAO services are not intended as a replacement for other treatment options and encourages individuals to seek treatment by a qualified health professional.

Mood Disorders Association of Ontario (MDAO)

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