



Bipolar Disorder

The extreme highs and lows of bipolar disorder can damage your relationship and disrupt your daily life, but you're not powerless. With treatment, support and good coping skills, you can manage your disorder and keep symptoms in check.

What are the signs of bipolar disorder?

The signs and symptoms of bipolar disorder can vary in frequency and severity. Some people are more prone to either mania or depression symptoms, while others alternate equally between the two.

Symptoms of mania include feelings of heightened energy, creativity, and euphoria. You might notice yourself talking faster, sleeping less, and making grandiose plans. However, you may also become reckless, aggressive, irritable, or delusional. Signs of bipolar depression include feelings of hopelessness, guilt, and physical and mental fatigue. You may move and speak slower, experience changes in appetite, and have a harder time getting out of bed.

What is the testing for bipolar disorder?

There is no single test for bipolar disorder. Getting an accurate diagnosis may involve a thorough review of your medical history, a physical exam, and a psychological evaluation. This can help your doctor determine if any medications or other conditions are causing your symptoms.



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Is bipolar disorder genetic?

A large-scale study in 2021 found that certain genes can increase a person's risk of developing bipolar disorder. Your risk is higher if you have a first-degree relative, such as a sibling or parent, with the disorder. However, you're not guaranteed to inherit it. Aside from genetic risk factors, environmental factors, such as substance abuse or childhood emotional abuse and neglect, may also play a role.

What is the difference between bipolar 1 and bipolar 2?

Bipolar 2 features hypomania rather than full-blown mania, but depression is more prominent. It also tends to have a later age of onset. People with **bipolar 1** suffer from mania as well as depression. They are also more likely to experience psychosis, or a disconnection from reality. Some research indicates that people with **bipolar 2** tend to experience more suicidal ideation, while people with **bipolar 1** may be more prone to taking suicidal actions. **Bipolar 2** seems to be more genetically similar to major depression, while **bipolar 1** has a stronger genetic similarity to schizophrenia.



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Symptoms of a Manic Episode	Symptoms of a Depressive Episode
Feeling very up, high, elated, or extremely irritable or touchy	Feeling very down or sad, or anxious
Feeling jumpy or wired, more active than usual	Feeling slowed down or restless
Having a decreased need for sleep	Having trouble falling asleep, waking up too early, or sleeping too much
Talking fast about a lot of different things (“flight of ideas”)	Talking very slowly, feeling unable to find anything to say, or forgetting a lot
Racing thoughts	Having trouble concentrating or making decisions
Feeling able to do many things at once without getting tired	Feeling unable to do even simple things
Having excessive appetite for food, drinking, sex, or other pleasurable activities	Having a lack of interest in almost all activities
Feeling unusually important, talented, or powerful	Feeling hopeless or worthless, or thinking about death or suicide

How to cope with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder

- ▶ Tip 1: Get involved in your treatment.
- ▶ Tip 2: Monitor your symptoms and moods.
- ▶ Tip 3: Act on warning signs.
- ▶ Tip 4: Reach out for face-to-face connection.
- ▶ Tip 5: Develop an active daily routine.
- ▶ Tip 6: Keep stress to a minimum.
- ▶ Tip 7: Watch what you put in your body.

Warning signs of mania or hypomania

- ▶ You can't concentrate.
- ▶ You find yourself reading lots of books at once.
- ▶ You're talking faster than normal.
- ▶ You feel irritable.
- ▶ You're hungry all the time.
- ▶ Friends have commented on your irritable mood.
- ▶ You have more energy than usual so need to be moving.

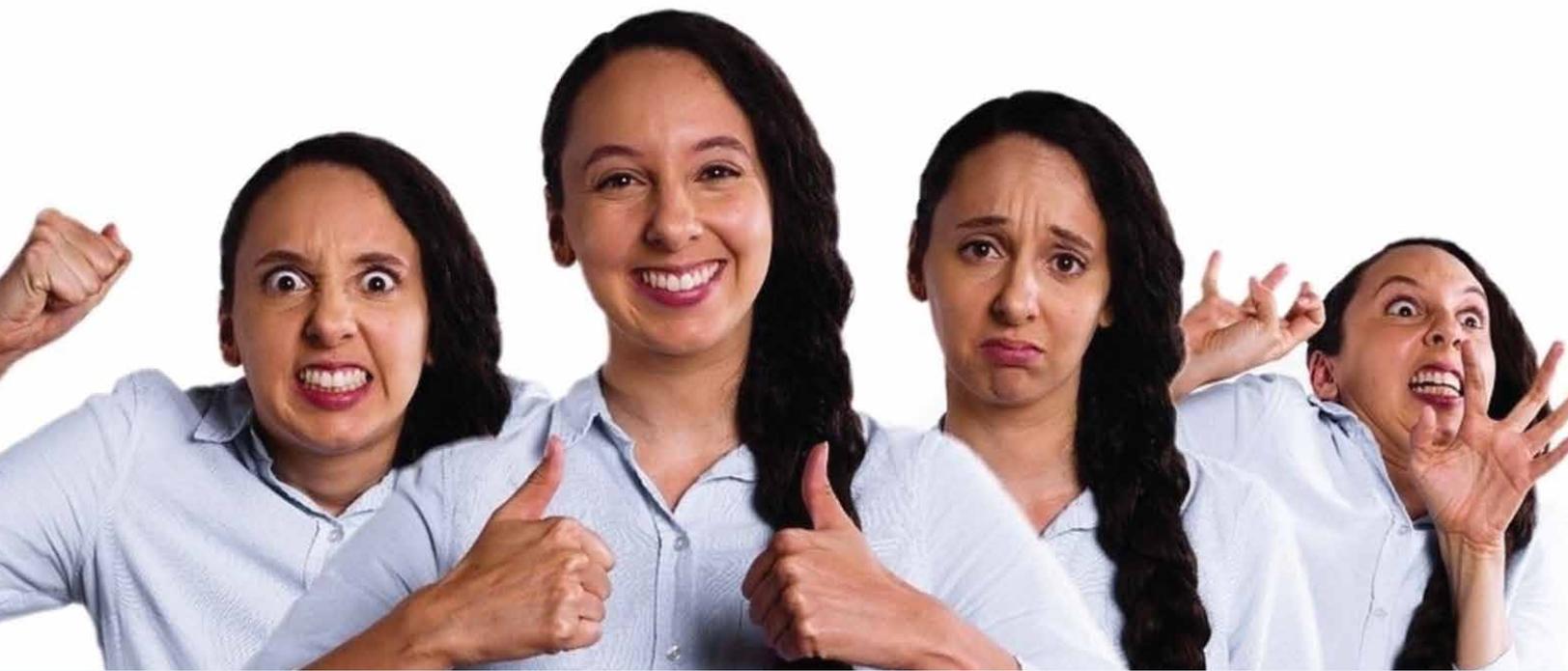
Common red flags for relapse

Warning signs of depression

- ▶ You've stopped cooking your own meals.
- ▶ You've stopped mixing with friends.
- ▶ People bother you.
- ▶ You crave sugary food such as chocolate.
- ▶ You're getting frequent headaches.
- ▶ You don't care about others.
- ▶ You need more sleep and take naps during the day.

Self-help tips for bipolar disorder

- Have a daily routine.
- Regular mealtimes.
- Adequate sleep.
- Regular relaxing activities.
- Diary of your moods, thoughts and triggers.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Enlist support of loved ones.
- Joining a self-help or patient group may be helpful.



Crisis Support - Create an emergency action plan

Despite your best efforts, there may be times when you experience a relapse into full-blown mania or severe depression. In crisis situations where your safety is at stake, your loved ones or doctor may have to take charge of your care. Such times can leave you feeling helpless and out of control, but having a crisis plan in place allows you to maintain some degree of responsibility for your own treatment.

A plan of action typically includes:

- A list of emergency contacts for your doctor, therapist, and close family members.
- A list of all medications you are taking, including dosage information.
- Symptoms that indicate you need others to take responsibility for your care, and information about any other health problems you have.
- Treatment preferences such as who you want to care for you, what treatments and medications do and do not work, and who is authorized to make decisions on your behalf.

If you need help, contact Platinum Health's Mental Health Services on 014 590 1700. EAP Counselors (010 133 0525) are also available 24/7 to give guidance and support.



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