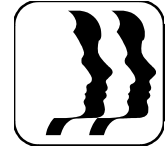




Bipolar Disorder

Diagnosis & Treatment Guidelines for Consumers and Families







In the United States more than 2.3 million people have been diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder (also known as manic-depressive illness).* If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with this illness, do not give up hope. You are not alone. There are many treatments available which can help you improve your life.

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar Disorder is a brain illness. It causes mood swings too big to be explained by things that are going on in the daily lives of people who have this illness. These mood swings may last for long periods of time.

Bipolar Disorder is a treatable illness that is caused by a chemical imbalance in your brain. Bipolar Disorder is not your fault nor is it the result of a "weak" or unstable personality. Medications can help most people.

Because the person who has this illness is often the last one to see it, it is important for family and friends to learn about Bipolar Disorder. The family can be especially helpful in reporting symptoms to the doctor. A person with this illness can move between episodes. This makes the illness more difficult to diagnose and treat. Close work between the person with the illness, the doctor and the family is very important. The following table shows how Bipolar Disorder may present itself. These symptoms below are not bad if they are balanced, like on a scale. Some of these symptoms are normal reactions to everyday life. However, when they become unbalanced and the scale is not even, it is important to seek treatment quickly. If you recognize these symptoms in yourself, or others, please ask for help.

 Mania (Manic Episode)	 Depressive Episode	 Hypomania Episode	 Mixed Episode
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra energy • Extra creativity • Extreme irritability • Feeling that others "can't keep up with me" • Others actually are not keeping up with me. • Unable to regain control of self or mood • Unable to function normally • Displays risky behavior • Not sleeping or very little sleep • Impulsive spending sprees. • Poor decision making ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling sad, or "down in the dumps" • Loss of energy or feeling tired all the time • Losing interest in things you normally enjoy • Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much • Loss of appetite or eating too much • Problems concentrating or decision making • Feeling slowed down or too restless to sit still • Overwhelmed • Neglect Hygiene • Feeling worthless • Thoughts of death or suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar, but less severe to mania • May have elevated mood • May feel better than usual • May be more productive • May seem "just the way you are" to others • May feel very good and wanting to "feel very good" may cause some people to stop taking their medication. • When untreated, a hypomanic episode can lead to a manic episode or a depression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes feelings of both mania and severe depression (Rapid Cycling) • May feel happy and be crying at the same time • May have high energy, but still be depressed • These feelings can occur at the same time quickly • May feel energetic but irritable and restless at the same time

* NIH Publication No. 00-4502; Printed 2000, Updated April 30, 2003. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/bipolarresfact.cfm>

Often, the person with Bipolar Disorder sees the doctor because of episodes of Mania, depression, or mixed mania. Hypomania is usually found as part of the person's history. The type of medication that is prescribed for the person depends on the type of episode and the history of the illness. The more informed you are, the better you will be able to ask questions of your doctor. The following information will help you make the most of the time that you will have during each visit with your doctor.

There are three phases of Bipolar Disorder

During all or some of these phases you may receive individual, group or family therapy, attend support groups, and/or receive medication management services.



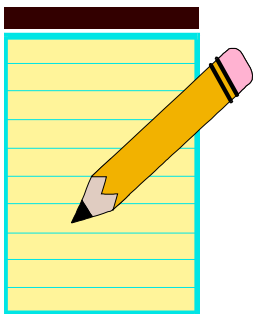
Acute: This phase is the most severe. You may need to spend some time in a hospital and take medicine that will help you. You, your doctor and your treatment team will determine when your treatment can be continued outside the hospital. Your treatment should focus on reducing your symptoms. Basic education about Bipolar Disorder and the prescribed medications are an important part of this phase.

Stabilization: You may still have many symptoms, but they are not as severe. You are working closely with your doctor and treatment team. You are learning about your illness, medications, blood levels and other lab work needed for some of the medications. You are spending more time with people and allowing them to help you. The quality of your life is improving.

Recovery and Reintegration (Maintenance/Rehabilitation): You know the steps to take to help you cope. You and your doctor are learning which medication and how much of it is right for you. You continue to learn about your treatment and your illness. You are educating friends and family about how Bipolar Disorder affects you. You understand more about why monitoring your blood levels and doing other lab work is important. You are getting out more. You may be going to support groups, returning to school, or trying to get a job. You may feel hopeful about your future and/or are receiving messages of hope for recovery from your treatment team, peers, friends, and family. Your amount of recovery will depend upon how much effort you put into it.



What is a Treatment Plan?



A treatment plan is like a road map that you build with your treatment team. It will help you to help yourself feel better. Ask for services that you think that you need. The treatment team may include a doctor, case manager, therapist, and/or counselors. It may also include peers or family members. Your treatment plan will include learning about your illness and how to cope with your illness. It may talk about having your family or friends help you. It may include job training. Your treatment plan has specific goals for you. Treatment efforts should be directed toward reaching those goals. If you don't feel better, tell your doctor or case manager. Then they can check to see if any changes need to be made to your plan. Taking care of yourself and following your treatment plan should help you feel better and may prevent future hospitalizations or acute episodes.

What should you know about taking medicine?

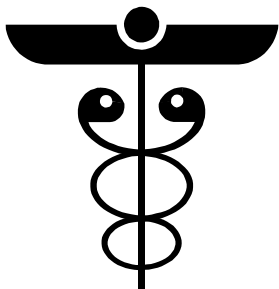


Mood Stabilizers (e.g. Lithium, Valproate, and Carbamazepine) are medicines used to treat the symptoms of Bipolar Disorder. They may be used alone or with other medications. They can also be used to treat depression. Antipsychotic medications may be used alone or with these mood stabilizers in some cases. Antidepressants are used carefully with this illness because they can cause a change from depression to mania. By working together, you and your doctor will choose the right medicine and dosage for you. The effectiveness of mood stabilizers is based on the level of the medicine in your blood. This is called a "blood level". Blood levels and other lab tests will be done at different times in your treatment.

When you start to take your medicine, you may begin to feel better soon. Sometimes medications take 4-6 weeks to reach their full strength. Your medication may also cause side effects. Some side effects are unpleasant. If you feel that your medicine is not working or your side effects are unbearable, do not stop taking your medicine. Contact your doctor before discontinuing your medication.

You need to know that these medications can cause side effects. These side effects may be long or short term. If you are worried about what your medication is doing to you, you should talk to your doctor.

Taking medicine is not always easy. At times you may not want to take it or have blood levels checked. When you take your medicine as recommended and have the blood levels checked, you have a better chance of recovery. It is important for you to tell your doctor if you use any other drugs including: over-the-counter, prescription, street drugs and alcohol. Talk to your doctor before you begin taking any other type of medicine. Some medicines may interfere with your medicine or cause it not to work as well.



What should I ask my doctor about my medicine?

1. What side effects can I have if I take this medicine?
2. How do I take this medicine?
3. Will this medicine interact with the other medicines I take?
4. How often should my blood level be measured?
5. How can I cope with side effects?
6. What should I do if I miss a dose or forget to take my medicine?

You should tell your doctor if:

1. You have taken this medicine before.
2. Someone in your family has ever taken this medicine.
3. You are using alcohol or using other drugs.
4. If you have stopped taking your medication.

What is informed consent?

Your doctor will talk to you about your medicine, including how and why you should take it. The doctor will explain the side effects some people have with this medicine. Your doctor will talk to you about other treatments for your illness. After you have been informed of all these things, you may be asked to sign a paper called an "informed consent" or give your "informed consent" verbally. By giving "informed consent", it means that you understand and agree with what your doctor wants you to do. It is your right not to sign this paper or give verbal consent. If you do give consent, you have the right to take back your consent at any time.



Each time you see your doctor you should explain how you feel about your treatment and how you think your medicine is working. You may find it helpful to make a list of what you want to tell the doctor. This will let your doctor know how you are doing and if you are taking the best medicine in the best amount for you. It will also help you know that your doctor is working with you.

**Many people live with Bipolar Disorder for most of their lives.
You can feel better if you follow your treatment plan and take your medicine.
Your doctor and the other members of your treatment team will help you.
You are the key member of the team.
No one can help you without your help.**

Area Support Groups



Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance – Tampa Bay: 813-878-2906

Carrollwood (Tampa): Northdale Recreation Center – Thursdays at 7pm.

Largo: (Pinellas County): 1st Christian Church of Largo – Tuesdays at 7:30pm

St. Petersburg (Pinellas County): Lutheran Church of the Cross – Mondays at 7pm.

Tampa: St. Joseph's Hospital: Conference Room C by cafeteria – Wednesdays at 7pm.

South Tampa: Holy Trinity Lutheran Church- Thursdays at 7pm

Tampa: University of South Florida, Louis de Parte Florida Mental Health Center – Wednesdays at 7:30pm

Tampa: James A. Haley VA Hospital, Saturdays at 7pm; 1C- Rm104

Zephyrhills: East Pasco Medical Center – Adults- Mondays at 7pm, Youth – 1st and 3rd Mondays at 7pm.

Additional Depression and Bipolar Support Groups

Lakeland: (863) 413-2788

Valrico: Parental Support – For Kids (813) 661-4543

Brandon: Brandon Library – Wednesdays at 7pm.; 813-685-4818

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)

- **Manatee County:** 941-758-3562
- **Lakeland**.....863-616-9642, St. David Episcopal Church, 7:00pm
- **Winter Haven**.....863-293-6589, 1st Tuesday, 7pm, 1201 1st St. S.
- **Hillsborough:**1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 6:30pm – Florida Mental Health Inst. – 974-1934
- **Town & Country Hospital**.....925-8302, 6001 Webb Rd, Sunday, 7:30pm

Dual Diagnosis Groups:

- Project Return – 304 W. Waters, Wednesdays 4pm ; 933-9020

Florida Health Partners

- Bradenton.....941-714-7277, Thurs. 6:00pm, Manatee Glens 6th Ave. Counseling Center

**If you would like more information, or if you have questions,
please talk with your doctor or call your ValueOptions member services representative.**



Resources:

- ValueOptions Diagnosis Based Treatment Guidelines
- Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines for Bipolar Disorder www.psychguides.com/bphe.html
- NIH Publication No. 00-4502; Printed 2000, Updated April 30, 2003.
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/bipolarresfact.cfm>

These materials are presented as an educational resource and as helpful information to you. These materials are in no way meant to represent medical or clinical advice, recommendations or therapy. If you have any issues regarding your medical or mental health condition and need advice, please consult your provider/doctor.

This diagnosis and treatment guideline for consumers and their families was written, produced, and developed by consumers, family members and advocates of the ValueOptions Tampa Service Center Member Advisory Committee, October, 2000; Reviewed and Revised, November 2003. Approved by the EMMC on 02/10/04.