

What is Bipolar I Disorder?

- Bipolar disorder is a mental illness characterized by debilitating mood swings.¹
- Bipolar I disorder is characterized by at least one lifetime manic or mixed episode; often individuals have also had one or more major depressive episodes.²

What is Bipolar Depression?

- Bipolar depression refers to the depressive phase of bipolar disorder.³
- Some people with bipolar disorder also experience periods of normal mood and behavior following a manic phase; however, all people with bipolar disorder will eventually experience one or more depressive episodes.^{3,4}
- When symptomatic, most people with bipolar disorder tend to be depressed, rather than manic.³
- Bipolar depression can be difficult to manage. While treatment may offer relief, some individuals may still experience symptoms of depression.⁵

Symptoms

- Symptoms of a major depressive episode associated with bipolar depression include experiencing five or more of the following symptoms nearly every day during the same two-week period which represent a change from previous functioning.
 - » Depressed mood most of the day
 - » Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day
 - » Significant weight loss
 - » Insomnia or hypersomnia
 - » Fatigue or loss of energy
 - » Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt
 - » Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness
 - » Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts or suicide attempt²

Prevalence

- In the United States, bipolar disorder affects approximately 10.4 million people.⁶
- It is estimated that more than 29 million people suffer from bipolar disorder worldwide.⁷

Impact

On patients and families

- Bipolar disorder is the sixth leading cause of disability worldwide and is among the top 10 leading causes of disability in the United States.^{8,9}
- Individuals with bipolar disorder and their families experience significant losses in their own functional status and quality of life, placing further stress on personal relationships.⁸
 - » Loss of employment, difficulty in regaining employment, days lost from work, financial difficulties and the potential for increased interactions with the criminal justice system all contribute not only to the cost, but also to the disability associated with bipolar disorder.⁸
 - » Many individuals with bipolar disorder experience marital and other relationship problems, including estrangement and divorce.⁸
 - » Stress from caregiving can make it hard to cope with a loved one's bipolar symptoms. One study shows that if a caregiver is under a lot of stress, his or her loved one may have greater difficulty following a treatment plan, which increases the chance for a major bipolar episode.¹⁰
- Substance abuse is very common among people with bipolar disorder, but the reasons for this link are unclear.¹¹ Some people may try to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol; however, substance abuse is known to worsen the course of bipolar disorder.¹
 - » One study found that 56 percent of people with bipolar disorder abused illicit drugs, and 44 percent had comorbid alcohol abuse.⁸

On health and mortality

- On average, bipolar disorder has been shown to reduce an individual's expected life span by 9.2 years.¹²
- Bipolar depression has been reported to be more likely to be accompanied by suicidal thoughts and behavior than mania.³ In fact, it has recently been shown that as many as one in five people with bipolar disorder commits suicide.¹²

- Bipolar disorder can also double a person's risk of early death from a range of medical conditions, including obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.^{13,14,15}
 - » Studies found 35 percent of people with bipolar disorder are obese.¹⁴
 - » Similarly, studies found that people with bipolar disorder are three times more likely to develop diabetes than the general population.¹⁵
 - » A 2009 study showed that people with bipolar disorder are 2.5 times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease.¹³

On healthcare costs

- Based on data from an insured population, the inpatient hospitalization rate of individuals with bipolar disorder (40 percent) was nearly nine times greater than the average rate for all other individuals with behavioral healthcare diagnoses (4.5 percent).¹⁶
- The costs per person associated with bipolar disorder have been estimated to be more than twice that of unipolar depression, making it one of the most expensive behavioral healthcare challenges.^{16,17} The estimated total U.S. economic burden of bipolar disorder between 1991-2009 was \$151 billion.¹⁸

Risk Factors

- Scientists are learning about the possible causes of bipolar disorder through several kinds of studies. Most now agree that there is no single cause for bipolar disorder – rather, many factors act together to produce the illness.¹
- Although a single, specific gene for bipolar disorder has not been found, children with a parent or sibling who has bipolar disorder are four to six times more likely to develop the illness, compared with children who do not have a family history of bipolar disorder.¹⁹
- It is also possible that environmental factors, such as distressing life events, can trigger an inherited tendency to develop the illness.¹

Diagnosis

- It can take up to 10 years before a person with bipolar disorder is correctly diagnosed. People who have bipolar disorder along with alcohol or drug use problems often go undiagnosed for even longer: 15-20 years.³

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