

- I can't focus on anything for very long.
- I sometimes can't stop talking and I talk really fast.
- I'm spending lots of money on things I don't need and can't afford.
- Friends tell me that I've been acting differently. They tell me that I'm starting fights, talking louder and getting more angry.

Signs of depression (downs):

- I am really sad most of the time.
- I don't enjoy doing the things I've always enjoyed doing.
- I don't sleep well at night and am very restless.
- I am always tired. I find it hard to get out of bed.
- I don't feel like eating much
- I feel like eating all the time.
- I have lots of aches and pains that don't go away.
- I have little to no sexual energy.
- I find it hard to focus and am very forgetful
- I am mad at everybody and everything
- I feel upset and fearful, but can't figure out why
- I feel like there isn't much point to living, nothing good is going to happen to me.
- I don't like myself very much. I feel bad most of the time
- I think about death a lot. I even think about how I might kill myself

Other signs of bipolar disorder

- I go back and forth between feeling really "up" and feeling really "down"
- My ups and downs cause problems at work and at home.

If you checked several boxes in these lists , call your doctor. Take the lists to show your doctor. You may need to get a check up and find out if you have bipolar disorder

2 Understand that bipolar disorder is an illness

Bipolar disorder is more than the usual ups and downs of life. It is a serious medical illness that involves the brain. The up feelings are called **mania** and the down feelings are called **depression**.

Most people with bipolar disorder go back and forth between mania and depression. Some people have both feelings at the same time, which is called a **mixed** state.

About 5.7 million Americans have bipolar disorder. It can happen to anyone, no matter what age you are or where you come from.

What causes bipolar disorder?

- You may want to know why you feel these extreme ups and downs. There may be several causes.

Bipolar disorder may happen because of changes in the brain.

- Bipolar disorder tends to run in families. This means that someone in your family such as a grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle, cousin, sister, or brother may have bipolar disorder.

- Sometimes the cause of bipolar disorder is not clear

Bipolar disorder is a serious illness, but it can be treated. You can feel better.

3 See your doctor

Don't wait. Talk to your doctor about how you are feeling. Get a medical check up to rule out any other illnesses that might be causing your mood changes. Ask your doctor to send you to see a **psychiatrist** (a medical doctor trained in helping people with bipolar disorder).

4 Get treatment for your bipolar disorder. You can feel better.

There are 2 common types of treatment for bipolar disorder: (1) medicine) and (2) "talk" therapy. Having both kinds of treatment usually works best. It is important to get help because bipolar disorder can get worse without treatment. Bipolar disorder is a long-term illness that needs to be treated throughout a person's lifetime.

Medicine

- See the psychiatrist your doctor suggest. He or she can prescribe medicines that work to control your moods. These medicines are called **"mood stabilizers"**. You also may need to take other medicines to help treat your illness.
- The medicines may take a few weeks to work. Be sure to tell your psychiatrist how you are feeling. If you are not feeling better, you may need to try different medicines to find out what works best for you.
- Medicines sometimes cause unwanted "side effects". You may have blurred vision, or feel sick to your stomach. Tell your psychiatrist if you have these or any other side effects.

Talk Therapy

"Talk " therapy involves talking to someone such as a **psychologist, social worker, or counselor**. It helps you learn to change how bipolar disorder makes you think, feel and act. Ask your psychiatrist who you should go to for talk therapy.

For more information visit:

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
Web site: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

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