

What is

Bipolar Affective Disorder

Bipolar affective disorder

is another name for what was once known as manic depression. 'Bipolar' describes the mood fluctuations - from the extremely elated mood (mania) to the very low mood (depression) - that people with this condition may experience.



Find ways of coping that work best for you. These are different for every person.

What causes it?

We do not know the exact cause of bipolar affective disorder. However genetic, biochemical, and stressful life events or circumstances may all play a role. If someone in the family/whanau has the condition, relatives may have an increased risk of developing it.

What are the signs?

Common signs of mania include elevated or 'high' mood, rapidly changing emotions and increased energy. People experiencing mania may be easily distracted and their conversation can jump rapidly from one topic to another.

People with bipolar affective disorder also experience times of depression when they may lose interest and pleasure in usual activities and are tired and physically slow. They may feel worthless or guilty and feel that life is not worth living.



MYTH: People with bipolar affective disorder cannot recover and lead full lives. FACT: With good care and support people can continue to lead full and enjoyable lives.

How is it treated?

Treatment of bipolar affective disorder involves a number of important components, each of which can be tailored to the person's needs. While the emphasis is on treatment in the person's community, in some cases hospital treatment may be needed. The main components of treatment are medication and psychosocial treatments which address the person's thinking, behaviour and relationships. In extremely rare cases, electro convulsive therapy (ECT) may be suggested.



Learn to recognise early signs of problems occurring and have a plan to maintain wellness.



Whanau/Family/Friends: Encourage the person to return to their usual activities without pushing or criticising them. Accepting them as they are now and having realistic expectations is very important.

Who gets it?

About one person out of every 100 will experience bipolar affective disorder. If a parent, brother or sister has the disorder, then the risk increases to about one or two in 10. It commonly begins between the ages of 15 and 40 years. Most people return to their usual level of functioning after times of illness, although about 20 to 30 percent will have some ongoing difficulties.



Learn what you can about bipolar affective disorder, its treatment and what you can do to assist.

Where can I get more information?

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

for resources, videos, books and further information.

81 New North Road, Eden Terrace, Auckland

Phone: (09) 300 7030, Fax: (09) 300 7020

Email: resource@mentalhealth.org.nz

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.nz

(see 'Information' for a full description of bipolar affective disorder)

BALANCE - New Zealand Manic Depression / Bipolar Support Network

Website: <http://www.balance.org.nz>

Bipolar Manic Depression Society Inc

PO Box 25 068

Christchurch

Phone (03) 366 5815

Fax (03) 365 5344

Website: <http://www.balance.org.nz/chch/index.html>

Email: bipolar.md@xtra.co.nz



SEEK HELP EARLY!

