

Bipolar Disorder

This fact sheet provides some information on Bipolar Disorder, also known as manic depression, and on services where help can be sought.

What is bipolar disorder?

An individual who has bipolar disorder, also known as manic depression, experiences extreme mood swings between deep depression and elated, excited behaviour. There may also be stable times between these severe highs and lows. Some people may also experience elements of psychosis, in that they see or hear things that others don't (experience delusions, or visual or auditory hallucinations).

Symptoms

Some people may experience only highs and others mainly lows, and some people may experience both- so at times they may be extremely depressed or extremely excited (mania). A person may behave in a risky or irrational manner. The frequency and duration of the two mood states vary from person to person.

Some individuals regularly have these mood swings over a number of weeks or months, and others experience them more in certain seasons, or only rarely. For others still, their experience of bipolar disorder may happen without warning.

Someone who experiences bipolar disorder may not be aware of any changes in their behaviour or attitude. They may later be shocked when they realise what they did during the episode of mania and the effects that it had. Some people find their experience of bipolar disorder to be very disruptive and distressing, while others find themselves becoming very creative and find it an enriching experience.

Symptoms of mania

Feelings of euphoria; feeling that one is of great importance; over-ambitious schemes and ideas; spending money extravagantly, building up debts; eating and sleeping very little; talking so fast that it can be difficult to understand ; easily irritable and angry.

Symptoms of depression

Overwhelming despair; feelings of guilt and worthlessness; inability to concentrate; difficulties in remembering things; perhaps suicidal feelings; irritability, hopelessness; weeping for no apparent reason.

What are the causes of bipolar disorder?

There is still uncertainty about the causes of bipolar disorder. However, research shows that in some cases genes or family history can place someone at a greater risk of developing it. The likelihood of a child of a parent with bipolar disorder developing the condition is about one in ten.

Distressing events, physical illnesses, alcohol or drugs can also affect the mood swings between depression and mania. An increase in stress and having insufficient coping mechanisms to deal with this stress can also put someone at risk. However sometimes a mood swing will occur without any obvious trigger.

Where can I get help?

It is much easier to manage the symptoms if help is sought immediately before the symptoms become worse. Treatment at an early stage can reduce the severity and duration of an episode of bipolar disorder. You should first see your GP who may refer you to a psychiatrist, but normally the treatments available consist of medication and psychotherapy. An admission to hospital may be deemed necessary if it appears that an individual is experiencing a severe form of bipolar disorder and may need to be in a hospital environment to receive care.

For more information on bipolar disorder and treatments available, please see Mind's booklet on the subject, which you can also order in hard copy:

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/bipolar-disorder

Local statutory services

[Harrow Assessment and Brief Treatment Team](#)

An assessment of their mental health needs will be carried out by a member of the team, feedback given, and time-limited treatment offered if appropriate.

This Team is also responsible for assessing your eligibility for a Personal Budget for your social care day support needs, currently 'substantial or critical' under the Fair Access to Care (FACS) criteria. If you are eligible, you will be referred to the Community Recovery Team at Atkins House, where a Care Coordinator will assist you to apply for a Personal Budget for your day support needs.

839 Honeypot Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AT
Tel: **020 8951 3770**

[Harrow Community Recovery Team](#)

Community recovery teams (previously known as community mental health teams) bring together a range of health care professionals who each have specialist skills who work with people living in the community who have complex and severe mental health problems. This Team is also responsible for supporting people who have been assessed to be 'substantial or critical' under the Fair Access to Care (FACS) criteria and assisting them to apply for and manage their Personal Budget for your social care day support needs.

Atkins House, 19 Marshall Close, Harrow HA1 4DH
Tel: **020 8422 9443**

[Harrow Home Treatment Team](#)

Home treatment teams help avoid admission to a mental health inpatient ward by supporting people in acute mental crisis in their homes.

Address: Mental Health Unit, Northwick Park Hospital, Watford Road, Harrow HA1 3UJ
Tel: **020 8869 2690**

Short term interventions and help for people in their own environment, who experience a mental health crisis.

Local voluntary services

Harrow Carers

376-378 Pinner Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 6DZ

Tel: 020 8868 5224

Email: admin@harrowcarers.org

Website: www.harrowcarers.org

Support for carers of people who have mental health issues.

Depression Alliance

9 Woburn Walk, London, WC1H 0JE

Tel: 0207 407 7584

Email: info@depressionalliance.org

Website: www.depressionalliance.org

Self help group run by members who have to live with depression.

Bipolar UK Support Group Harrow

A self-help group for people who experience Bipolar Affective Disorder (Manic Depression), and their carers and friends.

Meeting times: 2nd Thursday of each month 7.30-9.30pm at The Bridge, Christchurch Avenue, Harrow, HA3 5BD

Website: <http://www.bipolaruk.org.uk/self-help-group-map.html>

National services

Bipolar UK

11 Belgrave Road, London SW1V 1RB

Tel: 020 7931 6480

Email: info@bipolaruk.org.uk

Website: www.bipolaruk.org.uk

National Debtline

Tricorn House, 51-53 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 8TP

Freephone: 0808 808 4000, Mon – Fri 9 a.m. to 9.p.m. Sat 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Fax: 0121 410 6230

Website: www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Offers free confidential and independent advice concerning debts

Websites

Bipolar Significant Others

Website: www.bpsso.org

An informal organisation offering support and information for people who do not have bipolar disorder themselves but know someone who does.

Pendulum

Website: www.pendulum.org

An on-line support group for people with manic depression

Created by:

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