



**PATHWAY
CLINIC**

comprehensive treatment for mental health

Bipolar Disorder

Mood changes are a normal part of life. But the roller coaster highs and lows of bipolar disorder are not normal. The moods of a person with bipolar disorder swing from periods of intense elation to periods of intense sadness.

The illness can disrupt every aspect of a person's life. In the manic "up" stage, the individual may be so unrealistically self-confident, energized, or hostile, that relationships and careers are destroyed. A person may think that he has a special relationship with world leaders or celebrities, or commit to multiple meetings, social activities, and critical deadlines on the same day, believing that he can accomplish anything. When on a destructive high, the person may make irrational decisions that risk personal health and family finances.

In the depressed stage, the same person can feel so low, fatigued, and helpless, that any activity is difficult. For people who have bipolar disorder and their families, there is good reason to hope...and to act. Once properly diagnosed, most people with bipolar disorder – even the most severe cases – can obtain relief from their symptoms. The first step to recovery is learning to understand the disorder's causes, signs, and treatment.

How do you know if a person has Bipolar Disorder?

In bipolar disorder, periods of normal mood usually occur between the periods of extreme highs and lows. The lengths of each episode vary from person to person and can change over time. If you or someone you know has experienced cycles of the following behaviors, professional help should be considered:

Manic Stage Behaviors:

- Increased energy
- Decreased need for sleep
- Increased sexual activity
- Uncharacteristic participation in high risk activities
- Loud, fast, or incoherent speech
- Easily distracted/Suddenly irritable
- Alcohol or drug abuse

Depressive Stage Behaviors:

- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Excessive crying
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Constant fatigue
- Inability to concentrate or function at work
- Loss of sex drive
- Overwhelming feelings of despair, hopelessness, and helplessness

What causes Bipolar Disorder?

- **Genetics and Heredity:** Research suggests that a biological predisposition to bipolar disorder is inherited. Eighty to ninety percent of those with bipolar disorder have a relative with some form of depression.
- **Biological Factors:** Bipolar disorder is often triggered by a disturbance in the brain bio-chemicals that regulate mood and activity. These chemicals are called neurotransmitters; they are substances which carry messages between nerve cells in the brain. An imbalance in the amount or activity of the neurotransmitters can cause major disturbances in thought, emotion and behavior.
- **Environmental Factors:** Stressful situations, such as marital difficulties, job loss, an illness or death of a loved one, can trigger a manic or depressive episode in a person vulnerable to the illness.

Help is Available...

Seventy percent or more of those patients with bipolar disorder respond well to medication that helps reduce the frequency and intensity of manic episodes. Lithium carbonate is the medication most often used to treat bipolar disorder. A combination of medication and professional counseling helps most patients return to productive and fulfilling lives.

If you think you, or someone you know, may have bipolar disorder, Pathway Clinic can help. If you would like more information or would like to make an appointment, please call 608-643-3663.