

Treatment for Bipolar



Bipolar disorder is a biological condition with a strong genetic component. It is a life-long condition that requires both medication and lifestyle management.

Treatment is directed at managing symptoms of the current episode of mania, hypomania or depression; and preventing the re-occurrence of these episodes.

Medical treatments

Bipolar disorder is usually treated with three main classes of medication:

- **Mood stabilisers.** These medications are used to treat or prevent episodes of mania, hypomania or depression.

The most commonly used mood stabiliser is lithium carbonate and sodium valproate (i.e. Epilim).

- **Antipsychotics.** These medications are used if psychotic symptoms are present or if symptoms of depression or mania persist despite the use of other medications. An example of an antipsychotic drug includes treatment with other medications, adding an antipsychotic drug such as olanzapine (Zyprexa), risperidone (Risperdal) and quetiapine (Seroquel).

- **Anti-depressants.** Are used to manage the symptoms of depression. It is usually prescribed in conjunction with a mood stabiliser or anti-psychotic. Some common anti-depressants often used in the management of bipolar includes the Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI) and the Dual Action Antidepressant.

Without medication, relapse is more likely.

Psychological Treatments

Whilst medication is the most effective treatment for bipolar disorder, psychological treatment is also an important addition to the long-term management of this disorder.

Psychological therapies such as supportive counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and psycho-education maybe helpful to help people understand their triggers, the personal and social disruptions of past episodes and to better manage their daily stressor in the future.

Psychological therapies are most effective when used in conjunction with medical treatment, however they can be ineffective if used as a stand-alone treatment.

Hospitalisation

Many people who have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder can receive most of their treatment without needing to stay in hospital. However, if someone become psychotic, highly agitated, is feeling suicidal or is behaving dangerously, treatment in hospital may be required.

Getting psychiatric treatment at a hospital can help keep you calm and safe and stabilize your mood, whether you're having a manic or major depressive episode.

Where to get more information?

A **Daily Mood Graph** and other relevant fact sheets can be downloaded from the Blackdog Institute website at: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/factsheets.

beyondblue: 1300 22 4636 www.beyondblue.org.au

24-hour phone support and online chat service and links to resources and apps

Mastering Bipolar Disorder: an insider's guide to managing mood swings and finding balance, Kerrie Eysers & Gordon Parker (2008) Allen & Unwin.

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