

A Guide for Patients and Families

Bipolar Disorder



Bipolar disorder is a mood disorder. The term 'bipolar' means that there are two extremes or polarities along the mood spectrum, where the person experiences depression, hypomania, or mania. There are varying severities of this disorder which affect one's energy levels and activities.

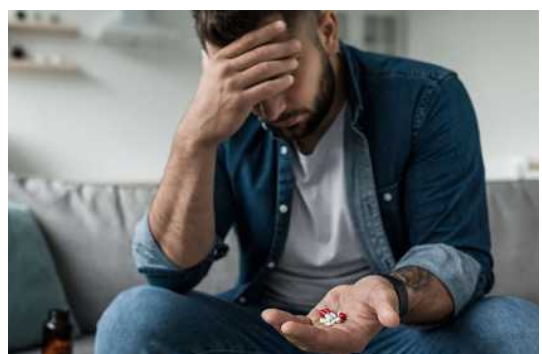
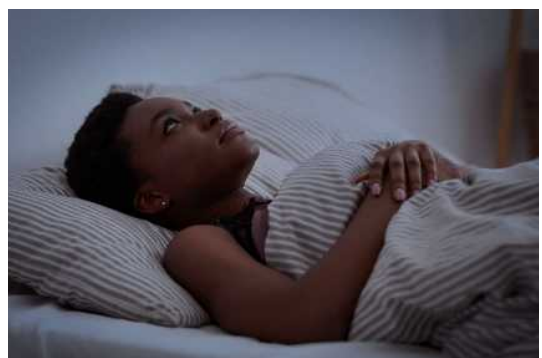
Signs and symptoms

Depression and mania usually occur in episodes. Each episode lasts for a few weeks to a few months. Mild cases may pass for normal for many years. In severe cases, the person may become agitated or experience psychosis. Different individuals will have different symptoms. For example, a person with bipolar disorder may experience predominantly depression, and another may experience predominantly mania.

In between episodes, the person can manage and carry out daily activities as usual.

When **depressed**, the person:

- Feels persistently sad.
- Feels hopeless.
- Feels lethargic.
- Experiences disturbances in sleep and appetite.
- Feels excessively guilty.
- Feels negative.
- Feels suicidal.





When **manic**, the person:

- Becomes overly elated and energetic.
- Becomes more irritable.
- Requires less sleep.
- Has racing thoughts.
- Talks very quickly.
- Takes many grand plans.
- May believe that he has supernatural powers, or a special mission.
- May impulsively engage in potentially dangerous behaviour.

Diagnosis & Treatment:

Medication is the main treatment option. Mood stabilisers, antidepressants, anti-psychotics, and sedatives can be used in different combinations to help a person manage acute episodes and to help prevent a relapse.

It may take a few days to a few weeks for a person to experience the optimal effects of medications.

People who are severely affected by bipolar disorder may benefit from Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). General anaesthesia has allowed ECT to become a relatively safe and painless procedure.



Psychological therapy is an option to help people with this condition to identify and manage their symptoms better.



For more information on how you can seek professional help at IMH, please call us at 6389-2000 (for enquiries), or 6389-2200 (for appointments).