

# Bipolar Disorder Facts

## What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a brain disorder that causes extreme mood swings, including emotional highs (hypomania and mania) and lows (depression).

These mood swings can affect sleep, energy, activity, judgment, behavior, and the ability to think clearly.

## Symptoms of a Manic Episode

A manic episode is a period of at least one week when a resident has elated mood and/or irritable mood most of the day for most days and possesses more energy than usual. A hypomanic episode is a less severe form of mania that will persist for at least four consecutive days. Symptoms of a manic and a hypomanic episode are the same. However, symptoms of hypomanic are less intense. At least three of the following changes in behavior will occur:

- Decreased need for sleep
- Increased or faster speech
- Uncontrollable racing thoughts or quickly changing ideas or topics when speaking
- Distractibility
- Increased activity
- Increased risky behavior
- Grandiosity

Sources: [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#), and the [National Institute of Mental Health](#).

## Symptoms of a Depressive Episode

A major depressive episode is a period of at least two weeks in which a resident has at least five of the following symptoms, including at least one of the first two symptoms:

- Sadness or despair
- Loss of interest in activities the person once enjoyed
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Fatigue
- Increased or decreased sleep
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Restlessness or slowed speech or movement
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequent thoughts of death or suicide

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis should be made by a qualified health professional. Determining a diagnosis of bipolar disorder includes:

**A physical exam and lab tests:** Used to rule out medical problems that may resemble bipolar disorder such as hyperthyroidism, medicines such as steroids, or other mental health conditions.

**Psychiatric evaluation:** Qualified health professional usually diagnose bipolar disorder based on a person's symptoms, lifetime history, experiences, and, in some cases, family history.