



Could mood swings mean bipolar?

This leaflet has been given to you as you and/or your doctor are concerned about your mental health. You might have discussed the possibility of bipolar and might have been referred to a specialist.

What is bipolar?

Bipolar is a severe, life-long mental illness characterised by significant mood swings from manic highs to suicidal depression. Bipolar affects everyone differently and can be difficult to diagnose, but there are some common signs to help you identify the illness.

Both men and women of any age and any social and ethnic background can develop bipolar. It can be triggered when work, studies, family and emotional stresses are at their greatest. For women, it can also be triggered by childbirth or menopause.

The key to coping with bipolar is an early diagnosis, acceptance of the illness and adapting your lifestyle so you're in control of your symptoms. You can manage bipolar with medication, health care, therapy and self-management.

The Bipolar UK mood diary overleaf will help you and your doctor understand your mood swings.

- More than one million people in the UK have bipolar.
- It can take an average of 10.5 years to receive a correct diagnosis.
- Individuals with bipolar are misdiagnosed, on average, 3.5 times.
- Treatment of bipolar is still hampered by stigma and misunderstanding.
- Bipolar affects every aspect of your life and relationships. This is why it's important you receive a correct diagnosis and find treatment that works for you.

Monitoring your moods

Over the next month, ideally around the same time every day, you should make a note of how you feel on a scale of 0 to 10 and write a brief comment about how you feel. It might also be a good idea to ask family and friends as they might be able to offer useful insight into your behaviour. If you feel comfortable, you should complete the mood diary with someone close to you.

As well as recording where you are on the mood scale, it's also a good idea to note:

- Medication
- Hours of sleep you are getting
- Exercise

Those not affected by bipolar will usually have mood swings between 4 and 6 on the mood scale. If you have bipolar, your mood swings go beyond these stable levels.

If you experience periods of depression, you may feel extremely tired and sluggish, cry a lot for no reason, lose interest in activities you once enjoyed, lack confidence, feel hopeless and have irregular eating and sleeping patterns. This would be 2 to 3 on the mood scale.

You might also talk too fast, not need much sleep, have uncontrollable rapid thoughts, feel over-confident and over-important, act impulsively and use poor judgement. This would be 7 or 8 on the mood scale.

Bipolar UK Mood Diary

Please make a note of how you're feeling (preferable around the same time every day and not first thing in the morning) on a scale of 0 to 10. The range from 0 to 3 represents degrees of serious depression, 4 to 6 represents a stable mood, and 7 to 10 represents high or manic episodes.

Day	Hours of sleep	How do you feel on a scale of 0 to 10?	Are you feeling irritable?	Day of menstrual cycle	Other comments
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