

Dark Therapy for Bipolar Disorder

Blue light-blocking glasses are used in a treatment approach for bipolar disorder called "**Virtual Dark Therapy**." This method aims to stabilize the circadian rhythm (the body's internal clock) by blocking the specific wavelengths of light—blue light—that tell the brain it is daytime, thereby preventing the suppression of melatonin.

Benefits for Bipolar Disorder

- **Reduction in Manic Symptoms:** Clinical research found that patients hospitalized for mania who wore blue-blocking glasses showed a significant drop in manic symptoms (as measured by the Young Mania Rating Scale) after just three days.
- **Improved Sleep Stability:** While they may not necessarily increase total sleep time, they are effective at *improving sleep regularity and efficiency*.
- **Circadian Rhythm Entrainment:** By simulating "virtual darkness," the glasses help the brain transition into a nighttime state even in environments with artificial lighting, which is crucial for *preventing the triggers of manic episodes*.

How to Use Them Effectively

To achieve the therapeutic effects observed in clinical studies, the glasses must be used according to a specific protocol:

1. **Choose High-Filtration Lenses:** Therapeutic effectiveness requires lenses that block at least 90–99% of blue light (typically deep orange or amber). Standard "clear" blue light glasses marketed for eye strain are generally insufficient for dark therapy.
2. **Follow a "6 to 8" Schedule:** In major clinical studies, participants wore the glasses from **6:00 PM to 8:00 AM**. If this is too restrictive, experts recommend wearing them at least 2 hours before bedtime for maintenance.
3. **Be Consistent:** Using them every night helps stabilize the internal clock. If you feel a manic episode starting, strict adherence to the evening protocol is often recommended.
4. **Avoid Daytime Use:** Do not wear them before 6:00 PM, as blocking blue light during the day can disrupt the circadian rhythm in the opposite direction and potentially cause depressive symptoms.

Recommended Options

Clinical studies and experts often point to specific brands that guarantee high blue light filtration:

- **Uvex Skyper (S1933X):** An affordable option (around \$10–\$15) often cited in *Psychiatric Times* for its high filtration efficiency. Available on Amazon.
- **Low Blue Lights:** This brand's products were used in the original Dark Therapy trials and are specifically designed for melatonin preservation. Available at www.lowbluelights.com
- **Circadian Eyewear:** Provides specialized virtual darkness devices designed for medical chronotherapy. Available at www.circadianeyewear.com

Important Note: Blue light glasses are an **adjunctive treatment** and should not replace prescribed medications. Always consult your mental health professional before starting dark therapy, as it can occasionally trigger depressive shifts in some individuals.