

How well are your symptoms of bipolar depression being managed?

Understanding bipolar depression

Bipolar depression is part of a larger condition called bipolar disorder.¹ Specifically, the “lows” that you may be feeling, those moments of hopelessness, these are the possible symptoms of the depressive moments associated with bipolar disorder.¹ In the United States, nearly 7 million adults and approximately 700,000 adolescents are affected by bipolar disorder.²⁻⁴ The depressive symptoms are often harder to handle and last longer than other bipolar disorder symptoms.⁵



The symptoms¹

Your experience with bipolar depression is unique, but some similarities among people with the condition do exist. Bipolar depression is a lifelong condition that creates unusual mood changes that can vary in length and severity. It is often the depressive symptoms versus the manic symptoms that motivate people with bipolar depression to seek support. People with bipolar depression may experience:

- Sadness and hopelessness**
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking**
- Fatigue**
- Inactivity and disinterest in activities that used to be fun**
- Sleeping or eating too little or too much**
- Feelings of worthlessness**
- Thoughts of death or suicide**

If you have thoughts of suicide, contact your health care provider right away, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at: 1-800-273-8255 or call 911.

Steps toward treatment and coping

When bipolar depression symptoms go unmanaged, they can make it difficult to keep a steady job or have personal relationships. While treatment may offer relief, some people may still experience symptoms of bipolar depression. But you don't have to accept this as your new "normal." If ongoing depression is affecting your day-to-day life, talk to your health care provider to see if there's a better way to help you manage your symptoms.

There's no single solution that works for everyone, but there are steps you can take to meet the challenges of bipolar depression and the impact it has on your life.



Know the signs.

Make note of the events that trigger your symptoms. This could help you, your loved ones, and your health care provider identify oncoming depression.



Talk to your health care provider.

Maintain a good relationship with your health care provider built on trust and communication. That's one of the best ways to work on your well-being.



Seek support.

Find emotional support from others living with similar challenges by sharing thoughts, questions, and ideas.



Find balance.

Eat right, exercise, and get adequate sleep. Activities like meditation and yoga may help alleviate stress and achieve balance in your life.



Get involved.

Consider volunteer work or look for a new hobby. Giving back to your community and learning new skills may help you stay active and connected.

Treatment options

There are a number of different types of medications that may help treat your bipolar depression symptoms. Talk to your health care provider about them and be sure to ask about side effects as well as any other concerns about medications.

Talk therapy, also known as psychotherapy, can be an important part of your treatment, along with medication. A therapist can help you cope with feelings and symptoms, and help you alter behaviors that may contribute to your illness.



How are you doing with your current treatment?

Reflect on your answers to the 4 questions below. Please think about your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your medication(s) during the past two weeks. For each question, please select the one response that best describes your own experiences.

Question 1:

How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the way your current medication(s) reduced your symptoms during the past two weeks?

- very dissatisfied
 dissatisfied
 neutral
 satisfied
 very satisfied

Question 2:

How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the side effects of your current medication(s) that affect your physical health and ability to function (for example: sleepiness, weight gain, tremor) during the past two weeks?

- very dissatisfied
 dissatisfied
 neutral
 satisfied
 very satisfied

Question 3:

How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the side effects of your current medication(s) that affect your mental function (for example: dizziness, confusion, trouble concentrating) during the past two weeks?

- very dissatisfied
 dissatisfied
 neutral
 satisfied
 very satisfied

Question 4:

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with your current medication(s) during the past two weeks?

- very dissatisfied
 dissatisfied
 neutral
 satisfied
 very satisfied

Dissatisfied? If you answered “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” to any of these questions, you may want to take this questionnaire to your health care provider and talk about options for your bipolar depression treatment plan.

It may be time to rethink your treatment plan

Sometimes, despite treatment, you may continue to experience symptoms. If that's the case for you, it may be time to follow up with your health care provider about your treatment. No one knows your body better than you.

Your detailed feedback can help your health care provider find out what treatment changes might be right for you. The questionnaire above can help you have a productive discussion the next time you see your health care provider.



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