

Does this sound like you?

You experience symptoms of a manic episode sometimes:

- Inflated self-esteem or grandiosity
- Increased energy, activity, restlessness, racing thoughts, and rapid speech
- Extreme irritability and distractibility
- Decreased need for sleep
- A sustained period of behavior that is different from usual
- Engaging in behaviors that aren't typical of you with potential for negative consequences. Examples include buying sprees and sexual behavior.

If you experience some of these concerns, you may have bipolar disorder.

What are bipolar disorders?

Bipolar disorders are illnesses that can be treated with medication and therapy. There are two bipolar disorders. In bipolar I disorder at least one manic episode has occurred. Hypomanic and major depressive episodes may have also occurred. In bipolar II disorder at least one hypomanic episode has occurred. A hypomanic episode is the same as a manic episode but lasts for a shorter length of time. In addition to at least one hypomanic episode the occurrence of at least one major depressive episode is present in bipolar II disorder. Symptoms of a major depressive episode may include the following symptoms:

- Persistently sad, anxious, or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, or helplessness
- Loss of interest in ordinary activities
- Decreased energy, feeling “slowed down”
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Sleep or appetite change
- Thoughts of death or suicide

When do bipolar disorders start and how long do they last?

Bipolar disorders typically begin in adolescence or early adulthood and may continue throughout life. They are often not recognized as an illness, and people may suffer needlessly for years.

How can I get help?

Talk to a counselor or a doctor about your concerns, and share how they interfere with doing everyday things and living your life. You are not alone. At least 2 million Americans suffer from bipolar disorders. They are equally common in men and women. Therapy helps many people with bipolar disorders by providing support and education.

A doctor may give you medication, which is often needed to treat bipolar disorders. The medication may take several weeks to work.