

## What is Bipolar Disorder?

Some people are more familiar with the term '**manic depression**' – which is a different label for bipolar disorder but is often used to describe the same thing.

There are technically 2 types of Bipolar Disorder:

**Bipolar I** – both extremes of depression and mania.

**Bipolar II** – mainly depressed mood but with some episodes of a milder version of mania, called hypomania which may be less intense than full mania or only last for a short period of time.

Of course, everyone experiences ups and downs, but the extent of these is much more extreme and disruptive in Bipolar Disorder.

About **1 in 100 people** will have mood swings severe enough to be labelled bipolar disorder.

Some people also experience **mixed episodes**.

In a mixed episode you experience either:

- ◆ A full high mood/mania with some features of low mood
- ◆ A full low mood/depression with some features of high mood
- ◆ A full high and low mood at the same time

The frequency, length and severity of mood episodes are highly variable between individuals and over time. To find out more information go to the REACT online toolkit [www.reactnhs.uk](http://www.reactnhs.uk)

## Causes of Bipolar Disorder

It is still not clear what causes people to develop bipolar disorder. In fact, most people agree that it is unlikely to have one cause, and more likely to be the result of a combination of genetic vulnerability, life events, and particular styles of thinking.

# Module 2: What is Bipolar Disorder?

1 2 What is Bipolar Disorder? 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

## Causes of Bipolar Disorder

It is still not clear what causes people to develop bipolar disorder. In fact, most people agree that it is unlikely to have one cause, and more likely to be the result of a combination of genetic vulnerability, life events, and particular styles of thinking.

## What do depression or mania feel like?

**Depression** feels terrible. Here are some of the key features of depression.

- ◆ Low mood
- ◆ Problems concentrating
- ◆ Loss of motivation and energy
- ◆ Withdrawal
- ◆ Eating and sleep disturbances
- ◆ Loss of interest or pleasure

**Mania.** As mood goes up, many people go through a period of hypomania which can feel pleasurable at first. If mood escalates into full mania, this can feel very frightening and out of control.

- ◆ High or irritable mood
- ◆ Increased energy and Decreased need for sleep
- ◆ Distracted by racing thoughts and ideas
- ◆ Seeking pleasurable activity – sometimes risky
- ◆ Disinhibition – behaving ways considered outside the norm

No-one would ever choose to feel or continue to feel depressed or experience mania, if they could help it but It can be really hard to come out of .



Your Early Intervention team can make sure you get access to the REACT online toolkit



[www.reactnhs.uk](http://www.reactnhs.uk)

Department of Health Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed therein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the HTA, NIHR, NHS or the Department of Health.

Funding Acknowledgement:

This project was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA), 14/49/34.

Copyright:

Intellectual Copyright Property of Lancaster University 2016 REACT