

BIPOLAR AND RELATED DISORDERS

BIPOLAR I DISORDER



SA Federation for
Mental Health

What it is:

Bipolar I is characterized by at least one full-blown manic episode lasting no less than one week or any duration if hospitalization is required. A manic episode is defined as a period of abnormally and persistently elevated or irritable mood, as well as abnormally and persistently increased levels of activity and energy. This manic episode may be preceded by or followed by hypomanic or major depressive episodes.

Common manic and hypomanic symptoms:

1. Inflated self esteem
2. A marked decrease in need for sleep
3. Extremely talkative, thoughts racing from one topic to the next
4. Low levels of concentration, easily distracted
5. Engagement in risky and potentially dangerous behaviour, for example unrestrained shopping sprees, sexual indiscretions, or substance use.
6. Engaging in activities or exhibiting behaviour that is uncharacteristic for the individual

Common major depressive symptoms:

1. Feeling sad, hopeless or empty
2. Diminished interest or pleasure in all activities
3. Significant weight loss or gain in a short period of time
4. Sleeping too much or too little
5. Fatigue or a loss of energy
6. Diminished ability to concentrate
7. Frequent thoughts of death and dying, or suicidal behaviour or attempts

Causes:

According to research, environmental, genetic and physiological factors may all contribute to the development of bipolar I disorder. A family history of bipolar disorder is one of the strongest risk factors for developing bipolar disorders. Bipolar disorder has also been found to be more common in high income than in low income countries.