



**iTEC**



**VTCT**

# **UMH9** – Understanding bipolar disorder

# Learning outcomes

LO1 Understand bipolar disorder

LO2 Understand the causes of bipolar disorder

LO3 Understand how bipolar disorder can affect individuals and others

LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with bipolar disorder



# LO1: Content and Assessment criteria

1.1. Describe what is meant by the term bipolar disorder

1.2. Outline the general signs and symptoms associated with bipolar disorder



# Definitions and descriptions

**Bipolar disorder** is a mental health condition that affects your moods, energy and activity levels which can swing from one extreme to another. The condition used to be known as manic depression.

- People with bipolar disorder have episodes of:
  - **Depression** – feeling very low and lethargic
  - **Mania** – feeling very high and overactive



# Definitions and descriptions

The extreme changes in mood can be very distressing for an individual.

A doctor may diagnose an individual with a particular type of bipolar disorder for example:

- Bipolar I
- Bipolar II
- Cyclothymia



# Bipolar facts and figures

- 1% to 2% of the population experience a lifetime prevalence of bipolar and recent research suggests as many as 5% of us are on the bipolar spectrum
- Bipolar is one of the UK's commonest long-term conditions with almost as many people living with bipolar as cancer
- Bipolar increases an individual's risk of suicide by up to 20 times
- The World Health Organisation identifies bipolar as one of the top causes of lost years of life and health in 15 to 44 year olds

(bipolar UK, <https://www.bipolaruk.org/faqs/bipolar-the-facts>)



# General signs and symptoms associated with **bipolar disorder**

During a period of depression, your **symptoms** may include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless or irritable most of the time
- Lacking energy
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering things
- Loss of interest in everyday activities
- Feelings of emptiness or worthlessness
- Feelings of guilt and despair
- Feeling pessimistic about everything
- Self-doubt
- Being delusional, having hallucinations and disturbed or illogical thinking



# General signs and symptoms associated with **bipolar disorder**

**Behaviour** during a period of depression may include:

- Not doing things you normally enjoy
- Having trouble sleeping, or sleeping too much
- Eating too little or too much
- Misusing drugs or alcohol
- Being withdrawn or avoiding people
- Being less physically active than usual
- Self-harming, or attempting suicide



# General signs and symptoms associated with **bipolar disorder**

The **manic phase** of bipolar disorder **symptoms** may include:

- Feeling very happy, elated or overjoyed
- Talking very quickly
- Feeling full of energy
- Feeling self-important
- Feeling full of great new ideas and having important plans
- Being easily distracted
- Being easily irritated or agitated
- Being delusional, having hallucinations and disturbed or illogical thinking
- Not feeling like sleeping



# General signs and symptoms associated with **bipolar disorder**

The **manic phase** of bipolar disorder **symptoms** may include:

- Being delusional, having hallucinations and disturbed or illogical thinking
- Not feeling like sleeping
- Doing things that often have disastrous consequences – such as spending large sums of money on expensive and sometimes unaffordable items
- Making decisions or saying things that are out of character and that others see as being risky or harmful
- Individuals may experience periods of depression and periods of mania with interim periods of “normal” mood. The patterns vary for different individuals and each have different time frames



# General signs and symptoms associated with **bipolar disorder**

**Behaviour** during the **manic phase** of bipolar disorder may include:

- Being more active than usual
- Talking a lot, speaking very quickly, or not making sense to other people
- Being very friendly
- Saying or doing things that are inappropriate and out of character
- Sleeping very little or not at all
- Being rude or aggressive
- Misusing drugs or alcohol
- Spending money excessively or in a way that is unusual
- Losing social inhibitions
- Taking serious risks with safety



# LO2: Content and Assessment criteria

2.1. Describe the triggers and possible causes of bipolar disorder



# Possible causes of **bipolar disorder**

## Causes

- **Genetics** – research suggests that bipolar disorder can be in part explained through heredity
- **Brain structure and function** – chemical imbalances between 1 or more neurotransmitters



# Possible causes of **bipolar disorder**

**Triggers** – stressful events can trigger the symptoms of bipolar disorder.

For example:

- The breakdown of a relationship
- Physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- The death of a close family member or loved one
- Physical illness
- Sleep disturbances
- Overwhelming problems in everyday life, such as problems with money, work or relationships



# Possible causes of **bipolar disorder**

Conditions that can co-occur with bipolar disorder:

- Psychosis – people with bipolar disorder also have psychotic symptoms
- ADHD
- Eating disorders
- Misuse of alcohol and drugs



# LO3: Content and Assessment criteria

- 3.1. Describe how bipolar disorder can affect individuals
- 3.2. Describe how bipolar disorder can affect others



# How bipolar disorder can affect the individuals

Consider the symptoms detailed of both the manic and depressive phases. These will also affect a person's:

- Self-esteem, self-value and confidence
- Relationships
- Employment prospects
- Access to care. In extreme cases the individual may be sectioned under the Mental Health Act
- Physical state
- Financial affairs
- Individuals experiencing bipolar may also experience psychotic episodes
- The stigma attached to mental health conditions such as this will also have an effect on the person's life due other people's perceptions and lack of understanding of the condition



# How bipolar disorder can affect others

- During episodes of illness, the personalities of people with bipolar disorder may change, and they may become abusive or even violent
- Family members or friends may be faced with a situation that requires immediate medical attention and/or the presence of the police
- During the depressive phase of bipolar disorder, suicidal thoughts are common and some research has shown the risk of suicide for people with bipolar disorder is 15 to 20 times greater than the general population
- Self-harm can also be a factor in phases of bi-polar disorder. This is usually an attempt by the individual to gain control over their lives. This is a very difficult concept for others to understand and can be very upsetting



# LO4: Content and Assessment criteria

4.1. Describe the ways in which bipolar disorder can be managed

4.2. Describe the treatment options available for people experiencing bipolar disorder

4.3. Outline two organisations available to help with the management and support of bipolar disorder



# Managing bipolar disorder

If the individual is in a severe phase of the disorder then medical intervention is the initial management. After this phase has passed there are various strategies available for the longer term and self-management.

- Talking about the condition with family and/or self-help groups/communities
- Accessing Community mental health teams (CMHT)
- Make a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)
- Stay active and eat well
- Avoid alcohol and drugs



# Treatment options available for people experiencing bipolar disorder

## Psychological therapies

These include talking therapies such as:

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)** – CBT is a talking therapy that can help to manage problems by changing the way you think and behave
- **Interpersonal therapy (IPT)** – Interpersonal therapy is a talking therapy that focuses on you and your relationships with other people

## Medication

- A GP or other health professional who specialises in this condition has access to a range of medications often referred to as ‘mood stabilisers’. The medications are effective for different phases, i.e. mania and depression



# Organisations available to help with the management support of bipolar disorder

- Primary care. This is the entry level of care in the NHS. You can get treatment and support from primary care services if you have mild or moderate mental health problems
- Community mental health teams (CMHT)
  - A mental health team (MHT) is part of community care. Community care is secondary care provided by the NHS which means you get treatment outside of a hospital stay. You may be referred to an MHT if you need more support with your mental health
- Mind – provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem
  - <https://www.mind.org.uk>
- Bipolar UK – the only national charity dedicated to empowering individuals and families affected by bipolar
  - <https://www.bipolaruk.org/what-we-do>





# Learning check

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- **Identify** the **two** medications that can be used to treat bipolar disorder
- **Outline two** psychological therapies that can be used to treat bipolar disorder
- **Outline two** strategies that can be used to manage bipolar disorder
- **Outline three** ways in which bipolar disorder may affect a person's life
- **Identify three** triggers associated with the causes of bipolar disorder
- **List three** behavioural changes associated with the manic and depressive phases of bipolar disorder

