

# TIPS

## for Living With Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder is characterized by chronic fluctuation between mania (highs) and depression (lows). It also causes unusual shifts in energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out daily tasks. Symptoms of bipolar disorder can be severe, but many people may be reluctant to receive a diagnosis. With a lifestyle that includes self-management and a good treatment plan, many people are able to cope with this disorder. The following tips may help if you have bipolar disorder.

**Avoid alcohol and nonprescribed drugs.** These substances can affect how your medications work. They also can cause bipolar disorder to worsen and trigger a mood episode. Consuming alcohol and nonprescribed drugs may make bipolar disorder harder to treat.

**Take your medications as directed.** While you may be tempted to stop taking your medications, stick with your treatment plan. Also, never skip or change your dose without talking with your doctor first.

**Record your mood.** Using a mood chart will help you monitor your symptoms and moods every day. Keeping a record of your moods, treatments, sleep, activities, and feelings may help identify triggers, effective treatment options, and times when treatment should be adjusted.

**Make adjustments for sleep.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Also, minimize napping, especially if it interferes with your sleep at night. Instead of viewing screens or engaging in stimulating activities before bed, try taking a bath, reading a book, or listening to relaxing music.



**Remember to exercise daily.** Incorporate at least 30 minutes of exercise into your daily routine. Exercise has a beneficial impact on mood and may reduce the number of bipolar episodes you experience.

**Stick to a schedule.** Many people with bipolar disorder find that if they stick to a daily schedule, it helps them control their mood. You should have set times for eating, socializing, sleeping, working, exercising, and relaxing, even through emotional highs and lows.

**Develop a plan for crises.** Create a plan of action for your supporters in case your bipolar symptoms become so severe and dangerous that you need others to assume responsibility for your care. Your crisis plan may include a list of emergency contacts, a list of all your medications, the symptoms you are having, and your treatment preferences.

**Know when to call.** Thoughts of death or suicide are common among people with bipolar disorder. If you or someone you know has thoughts of death or suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 or immediately dial 911.

*This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at [info@neurologyreviews.com](mailto:info@neurologyreviews.com).*

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