

Adults usually stay up or down for longer stretches.

When people have bipolar disorder they sometimes look like they might have another condition, such as ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder) With either of these conditions a person might think, talk, and act at a much faster than normal pace. But they are completely different conditions with different causes and different treatments. Only a specially trained doctor should decide what the problem is and how to treat it.

Mania and Deep Lows

In the high energy phase of bipolar disorder, a person might feel unusually positive about things - or be very irritable or even enraged (which means very angry). The person often will have a lot of extra energy and might believe they can do anything, even fly. The person's thoughts might race from topic to topic, which can make it difficult to sleep well.

If the person's mood then crashes, the person may feel very sad or irritable and might cry a lot. Things that were fun no longer seem interesting, and the person may feel very tired and unable to concentrate. The person may even feel worthless or that life isn't worth living.

Any time you are worried about your mood or feel unusually sad, you should talk with your parent or a trusted adult. Someone who is having mood swings might feel better after seeing a psychiatrist, a psychologist, or counselor. It's better to get medical attention quickly because then the person can start feeling better instead of letting the problems get worse.

Diagnosis and Treatment

It's much easier to tell if someone has a broken bone or an ear infection than it is to determine that someone has bipolar disorder. But specially trained doctors can often figure it out by looking at the way the person acts or talks and by listening to the person's symptoms or past experiences.

If a doctor says a person has bipolar disorder, it can usually be treated so that the person lives a full, creative, productive life. A combination of medicines can both prevent the symptoms and treat them if they occur. Sometimes it takes the doctor a while to find the right medicines or the right amounts for that particular person. Treatment also involves talking with a doctor on a regular basis and sometimes talking with other people who also have bipolar disorder. Over time, people with bipolar disorder can learn techniques that will help them feel more in control during mood shifts.

Although there's no cure for bipolar disorder, it's important to know that the condition can be treated and managed, especially if it's diagnosed early. And scientists are doing a lot of research on bipolar disorder, especially on how it affects kids.

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