



**HEINZ C. PRECHTER BIPOLAR
RESEARCH PROGRAM**
MICHIGAN MEDICINE

**Did you know
Michigan
Medicine has
a research
program for
bipolar
disorder?**

Photo from cell culture under a
microscope from the Prechter Program



BIPOLAR DISORDER

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY

Rachel Upjohn Building
4250 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

734-764-0231

michmed.org/psychiatry
www.prechterprogram.org

Save the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and other
mental health info as a contact in your phone.
Scan this QR code:



The mission of the Heinz C. Prechter Bipolar Research Program is to discover the mechanisms that contribute to bipolar disorder, predict and improve outcomes, and develop effective, innovative treatments.

Learn more about the Prechter Program at
prechterprogram.org

Interested in becoming a research participant?
Email our research staff at bpresearch@umich.edu

Executive Officers of Michigan Medicine:

Marschall S. Runge, M.D., Ph.D., Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs University of Michigan, Dean, U-M Medical School, CEO, Michigan Medicine; Steven L. Kunkel, Ph.D., Executive Vice Dean for Research; David C Miller, M.D., M.P.H., Executive Vice Dean for Clinical Affairs; Debra F. Weinstein, M.D., Executive Vice Dean for Academic Affairs

The Regents of the University of Michigan:

Jordan B. Acker, Michael J. Behm, Mark J. Bernstein, Paul W. Brown, Sarah Hubbard, Denise Ilitch, Ron Weiser, Katherine E. White, Santa J. Ono (*ex officio*)

© 2025, Regents of the University of Michigan



What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a condition with strong mood swings, ranging from **mania** (uncontrolled energy) to deep **depression**. These symptoms of bipolar disorder are often severe and much different from the normal ups and downs of daily life.

Bipolar disorder affects all types of people from different cultural, economic, and social backgrounds. Although most people are diagnosed by early adulthood, it can affect people of all ages. Many people don't get formally diagnosed with bipolar disorder until 8-10 years after their symptoms first start. Because symptoms of bipolar disorder can look similar to other mental health disorders, it's important to look at an individual's symptoms over time to make an accurate diagnosis.

Bipolar disorder is a complex condition. It tends to run in families, but it also may occur with no family history. There are 2 types of bipolar disorder: bipolar I and bipolar II.

- **Bipolar I** disorder involves episodes of mania, which are periods of extremely high or irritable mood with increased energy. These episodes cause severe impairment in one's relationships, home life, and/or at work or school, often making it more difficult to maintain or develop close relationships and keep jobs.
- **Bipolar II** disorder includes episodes of hypomania and depression. Hypomania is a period of high or irritable mood with increased energy that does not cause severe impairment but is noticeably different than the individual's typical self.

There is also a range of bipolar spectrum disorders, which include unspecified bipolar disorder, other bipolar disorder, and cyclothymic disorder. These conditions have many of the same symptoms but do not meet the criteria for bipolar I or II.



What are the Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder?

People with bipolar disorder experience mood swings ranging from “highs” (mania or hypomania) to “lows” (depression).

What are the Symptoms of Mania?

Mania is a period of abnormally high energy and mood. This mood can be either intensely happy and confident or irritable. Other common features include:

- Extremely high self-esteem (grandiosity)
- Decreased need for sleep (feeling rested after 2-3 hours of sleep)
- More talkative than usual or pressure to keep talking
- Racing thoughts
- Distractibility
- Restlessness and increased movement
- Reckless behavior, poor judgment, or impulsiveness that puts someone at risk for painful consequences

What are the Symptoms of Depression?

The common features of depression are low energy, with a persistent negative view of self, the world, and the future. Other common symptoms include:

- Feeling sad or empty
- Feeling irritable or restless
- Feelings of hopelessness or guilt
- Difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions

- Withdrawing from people and feeling alone
- Less interest in friends, family, hobbies, or other activities that normally bring pleasure
- Regular, unexplained aches and pains
- Changes in weight (loss or gain)
- Overeating, or loss of appetite
- Changes in sleep patterns (sleeping a lot or not being able to sleep well)
- Thoughts of suicide, or suicide attempts

The key feature of bipolar disorder is the presence of mania or hypomania. Many, but not all, people living with bipolar disorder experience depression and for some, depression becomes the main challenge in treatment. For others, unstable moods and energy levels are chronic and may persist even when the individual is not in a full episode of depression, mania, or hypomania.

What are the Treatments for Bipolar Disorder?

Treatments for bipolar disorder include **medications** and **psychotherapy**. Experts usually recommend a combined treatment approach, which involves both. Most people with bipolar disorder benefit from a long-term treatment strategy that typically includes a mood-stabilizing medication, such as Lithium. Lifestyle recommendations to help with bipolar disorder include regular exercise, healthy eating and drinking, consistent sleep, and avoiding substance use (drugs and alcohol).

There are no tests to determine which treatment will work best for a specific person. It can take several tries to find the right treatment or combination of treatments. It's best to have an ongoing relationship with a trusted treatment provider to figure out the best treatment strategy. The support of friends and family is also very important. Be aware that episodes of depression, mania, and hypomania can occur suddenly, and close friends or family members can help identify problems so that they can be addressed as quickly as possible.