

The Association

In 1983, the Society for Depression and Manic Depression was founded by Gwen Finnen as a self-help organization. In 1998, the organization changed its name to the Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba, Inc.

We Offer:

Peer Support

Staff and Volunteers provide support and information to the community and in hospital. We hold regular support meetings for sharing concerns, experiences, information and support.

Education

Public education forums promoting early awareness, recognition, and treatment. Group presentations and workshops aim to identify symptoms, educate and encourage clients and caregivers, reduce the stigma associated with these disorders.

Advocacy

We work together with other social and mental health providers to bring about positive change through public awareness and education.

For More Information

Contact:

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Regional Office



MDAM

**Helping Others To
Help Themselves**



**My Family Member,
Friend,
Co-Worker,
Has Bipolar Disorder.**



How Can I Help?

What Is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar Affective Disorder (or Manic Depression), is a disturbance of mood that is characterized by cycles of both Depression and Mania. A person with Bipolar Disorder may experience mood swings that can occur both gradually, and occasionally with rapidity. During the depressed cycle, a person may experience some or all of the symptoms of depression. Symptoms of mania can affect judgment, thinking and behaviour, leading to potential problems and behaviour.

What Causes Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar Disorder affects approximately 1.5% of all people. In Canada more than 450,000 people have, or will have this disorder. Although a single cause has not been identified, it is known that many factors, including biochemical, genetic and environment play a part in this illness.

Research suggests that an improper balance of neurotransmitters in the brain is related to the symptoms and episodes of Depression and Mania. The biochemical imbalance may represent a genetic vulnerability set into motion by prolonged stress, trauma, physical illness, or some other environmental factor. Medications work by correcting the imbalance. There is growing evidence that heredity is involved, especially in the more recurrent forms of the disorder. The exact mechanism by which Bipolar Disorder is transmitted from one generation to the next is unknown.

Treatment For Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder is usually treated with a variety of medications, together with supportive psychotherapy. The most common medications are mood stabilizers such as Lithium Carbonate, Valproic Acid, and Tegretol. Medications prescribed for this disorder may also include antidepressants, anti-psychotics, and anti-anxiety agents. Since Bipolar Disorder is a recurrent illness, often with widely separated episodes over many years, you may have to take medications for long periods of time.

Symptoms Of Bipolar Disorder

Depressive Symptoms:

- Feelings of sadness, anxiety, and hopelessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and low self-esteem
- Restlessness, irritability
- An inability to feel anything at all, an 'empty' mood
- Sense of impending doom and disaster
- Loss of physical energy, feeling lethargic or tired all the time
- Increase or decrease in weight
- Increase or decrease in sleep
- Thinking, memory impairment, or poor concentration
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or hurting oneself



Symptoms of Mania

- Excessive elation
- Decreased need for sleep
- Increase in spending habits
- Excessive energy/agitation
- Feelings of grandiosity/inflated self-esteem
- Poor judgment
- Racing thoughts, flight of ideas
- Excessive interest in activities
- Rapid, unpredictable emotional changes
- Increase in sexual drive and energy
- Extremely talkative/pressured speech
- Extreme irritability

What You Can Do To Help

- Treat them with respect.
- Educate yourself, and encourage them to do the same. The more you know about the illness, the better you will be able to help.
- Encourage them to seek professional help, although in the manic phase of the illness, because of the euphoric feeling, they may not believe they need treatment.
- Encourage them to take their medication.
- Help them accept they have an illness, not a weakness.



- When they need to talk, listen and give them uncritical support.
- Encourage them to join a support group. Go with them!
- Help them communicate their feelings to others.
- Help them to know their triggers for both mania and depression. For instance, alcohol can be a trigger for both mania and depression.
- Reward steps taken towards recovery.
- Encourage positive self-talk. Help them find positive aspects in their life.
- Join them in positive relaxation. See a movie or listen to music.
- Help them to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Let the person know you genuinely care!

Help them help themselves!