

## **DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE**

## Managing Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder may affect your education, relationships, and occupation, so it's important to understand your symptoms and treatment options. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

## **Vocabulary to Know**

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Bipolar I	A type of bipolar that involves at least one manic episode. It usually includes a major depressive episode as well.
Bipolar II	A type of bipolar that involves a major depressive episode and at least one hypomanic episode.
Euthymia	A stable mental state that is commonly associated with bipolar disorder. Most people with bipolar will experience periods of euthymia.
Hypomania	A mild form of mania that involves elation and hyperactivity. During a hypomanic episode, someone with bipolar may experience excitement, hyperactivity, or irritability and they may have a reduced need for sleep.
Hypersomnia	Excessive daytime sleepiness or excessive time spent sleeping which may be a symptom of depression.
Mania	Mania is characterized by periods of great excitement, over-activity, and euphoria. It may also involve racing thoughts, extreme behavior, and irritable mood. Manic episodes occur in bipolar I.
Anticonvulsant	While anticonvulsants are usually prescribed to treat seizures, many of them are also used as mood stabilizers. They may be prescribed to control manic episodes in people with bipolar disorder.
Antipsychotic	Antipsychotic drugs help regulate brain circuits that control mood, perception, and thinking. They are sometimes prescribed to people with bipolar disorder because they improve manic episodes quickly.
Hallucinations	Hallucinations are characterized by physical sensations that are not real, such as hearing things, seeing things, or smelling things that aren't actually there. Sometimes, people with bipolar disorder experience hallucinations during extreme manic episodes or during periods of extreme sleep deprivation.
Insomnia	Insomnia refers to the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep. It is very common in depressive and manic episodes of bipolar.



## **Questions to Ask**

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage bipolar disorder.

Ab	out Symptoms	
	What's the difference between bipolar I and bipolar II?	
	How do I tell the difference between normal mood swings and bipolar?	
	What are the warning signs of a depressive episode or a manic episode?	
	Are there certain things that are likely to make my symptoms worse?	
Ab	out Causes & Risk Factors	
	Is bipolar disorder hereditary?	
	What contributed to my bipolar disorder?	
Αb	out Diagnosis	
	Is there a test that determines if I have bipolar and which type?	
	How long have I most likely had bipolar disorder?	
Ab	out Treatment	
	Do I need to take medication to manage my symptoms?	
	Will I need blood tests to manage my medication?	
	How soon will my medications work?	
	What side effects should I look out for?	
	What kinds of results should I expect to see from medication?	
	Will talk therapy help?	
	Should my family be involved in my treatment?	
	How long am I going to be on medication?	
	Will I have symptoms, even with medication?	
	_	



Ab	out Coping and Living With	
	Are there any support groups for people with bipolar	
	disorder?	
	Should I tell my employer I have bipolar disorder?	
	What should I do if I notice my mood shifting to either a depressed or elevated state?	
	Would it be helpful to chart my moods?	
	How can I deal with sleep problems?	
	Can I drink alcohol?	
	Could being diagnosed with bipolar affect my ability to get health insurance, life insurance, to join the military or to own a firearm?	
	What lifestyle changes should I make?  Are there any dietary changes I should make?	
_		
	Does bipolar disorder qualify me for disability benefits?	