

# What You Should Know About Bipolar I Disorder

**Recorded: January 23, 2025**

## Transcript

*Dr. Fabiano Gomes:* Here's what you should know about bipolar I disorder. I am Dr. Fabiano Gomez, an academic psychiatrist and assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University.

Bipolar I disorder is a mental health condition that affects around 1% of the population and can have profound effects on a person's life, but with the right knowledge and treatment, people can lead fulfilling lives. Bipolar I disorder is a mood disorder characterized by extreme shifts in mood, energy, and activity levels. These shifts include manic episodes, periods of abnormally elevated or irritable mood, often accompanied by increased energy, impulsivity, or risky behaviour. These episodes can last for days or even weeks and may be so severe that they require hospitalization. People with bipolar I disorder can also experience depressive episodes marked by feelings of sadness, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating.

Bipolar I disorder is defined by episodes of mania and depression. A manic episode typically involves high energy euphoria or irritability, lasting at least seven days or shorter if hospitalization is required. During mania, individuals may feel invincible or overly confident, talk rapidly, take on multiple tasks, or engage in risky behaviours like reckless spending or unsafe driving. Sleep is often drastically reduced without feeling tired.

In contrast, depressive episodes can bring overwhelming feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or guilt. This episode might also involve fatigue, changes in appetite to sleep, difficulty concentrating and even thoughts of self-harm. At times, patients may present with both manic and depressive symptoms at the same time in what we call a mixed presentation.

A common misconception about bipolar I disorder is that it's just about having good days and bad days. In reality, the mood episodes in bipolar I disorder are far more severe and often unrelated to life events. Another myth is that people with this disorder can simply snap out of it. This is not true. Bipolar I disorder is a medical condition that requires proper diagnosis and treatment.

One of the most exciting advancements in bipolar one disorder research over the past decade has been the development of personalized treatment approaches. Scientists are now exploring how genetic, metabolic, and brain imaging data can help predict which treatments will work best for individual patients. There's also been a growing focus on the role of lifestyle interventions, such as diet and sleep management, to improve long-term outcomes.

If you or someone you know may have bipolar I disorder, don't wait to seek help. Start by reaching out to your primary care provider or a mental health professional for an evaluation. Early diagnosis and treatment are key to managing symptoms and improving quality of life. Together, through awareness and research, we can help reduce the stigma surrounding bipolar I disorder and support those affected by it.

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