

In this issue >>>

Mood Disorder I: Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder Continued

Fireworks Safety



July
2011

City of McAllen

Benefits Department Newsletter

Current Topics >>>

Fireworks Safety

- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Never have any portion of your body directly over a fireworks device when lighting the fuse. Move back to a safe distance immediately after lighting.
- Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.
- Never light fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- After fireworks fully complete their functioning, water the device before discarding to prevent a trash fire.
- Make sure fireworks are legal in your area before buying or using them.
- Supervise small children with sparklers. Parents often don't realize that there are many injuries from sparklers to children under five. Sparklers burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees - hot enough to melt some metals.



Bipolar Disorder

You might not suffer from bipolar disorder, but maybe you have a family member or a friend that does. Learning about the facts associated with bipolar disorder can empower you to become a better supporter and friend. Read the following article for more information on Bipolar Disorder.

Bipolar Disorder, also known as Manic-Depressive Disorder, is defined by extreme mood swings alternating between episodes of extreme highs (mania) and extreme lows (depression). In some cases, bipolar disorder combines mania and depression which is known as a *mixed episode*. There are three main types of bipolar disorder: *Bipolar I Disorder*, *Bipolar II Disorder*, and *Cyclothymia*. *Bipolar I Disorder* is the most extreme type of bipolar disorders. The manic mood swings that are experienced in this type of disorder can cause a significant amount of difficulty in jobs, school, and relationships. These manic episodes are extremely dangerous. *Bipolar II Disorder* is less severe than Bipolar I. In this type of disorder, some mood changes or irritability are experienced, but sufferers can generally function in normal daily activities. Instead of mania, victims experience Hypomania, a less-severe form of mania. Episodes of depression tend to last longer than hypomania in this type of bipolar disorder. The third type of bipolar disorder, and the most mild of the three, is *Cyclothymia*. In this type of disorder, hypomania and depression are disruptive but in less severe forms as compared to the other two types of bipolar disorder. The majority of the time, signs of bipolar disorder go unnoticed. Some of these **symptoms** include:

Mania

- Increased energy
- Rapid speech

- Decreased need for sleep
- Racing thoughts

Depression

- Feelings of hopelessness/ sadness
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbance
- Thoughts of death/suicide.

The severity of both mania and depression vary in each individual, but any possible sign of either should not be taken lightly. Although there is no clear reason as to why bipolar disorders develop, researchers believe that bipolar disorders are due to physical changes/ chemical imbalances in the brain. Imbalanced hormones, having a family history of bipolar disorders, and traumatic experiences increase the chances of developing one. Individuals who experience periods of high stress, abuse drug and alcohol, and are between the ages of 15-30 are at a higher risk for developing a type of bipolar disorder. Some people who suffer from bipolar disorder tend to develop other **health conditions** either before or after they are diagnosed with bipolar disorder. These health conditions include:

- Anxiety disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Social Phobia.
- Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
-Symptoms associated with ADHD tend to be similar to those of Bipolar Disorder.

Bipolar Disorder Continued

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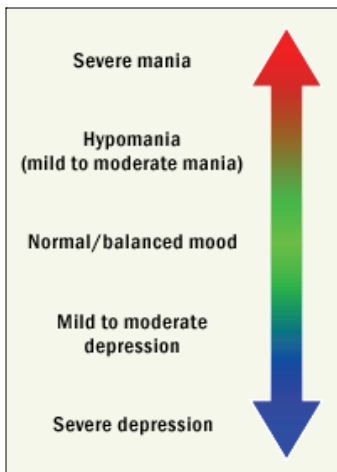
Because of the similarities, it can be difficult to differentiate between the two. Sometimes one is mistaken for the other, and people get misdiagnosed.

- **Addiction/ Substance abuse**
 - Many individuals who suffer from bipolar disorder also experience alcohol/ drug problems. Although these substances may seem to ease symptoms of bipolar disorder, the use of alcohol and drugs have been known to worsen/ trigger depression and mania.

Although bipolar disorders are serious health conditions, 80-90% of people who suffer from them can be treated and live normal lives.

Treatment for bipolar disorder is lifelong, even if you feel better. Treatment usually begins with what is called, *Initial Treatment*. Initial treatment is the process of taking medications to stabilize the mood. During this process, doctors work with the patient to find long-term treatment. The next step is *Continued Treatment (maintenance treat-*

ment). Continued treatment is the process of managing bipolar disorder on a long-term basis. Individuals who skip their maintenance treatment increase their risk of relapsing. *Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)* is a form of treatment that uses small amounts of electricity and applies it to the scalp in order to create changes in the brain chemistry. The change in brain chemistry is believed to lead to mood improvements. ECT is used on patients that suffer from severe depression or who have tried other forms of treatment but did not see improvements. Individuals who develop bipolar disorder but are unable to take oral medication are often treated with ECT. It is important to remember that every individual is different, which makes bipolar disorder treatments different as well. Although every individual who experiences bipolar disorder will more than likely receive specialized treatment, there are certain lifestyle changes that are recommended to all victims of bipolar disorder. Staying clear of unhealthy relationships, receiving plenty of sleep, and refraining from alcohol and illicit drug use are just a few lifestyle changes that have been known to reduce the symptoms of bipolar disorder. A lifestyle that includes regular exercise is also recommended because exercise releases brain chemicals known as endorphins that make people feel good. Although there is no way to **prevent** bipolar disorder, getting treatment at the earliest sign can lessen the effects of mania and depression. Bipolar disorder is a long-term condition, but following a treatment plan can allow healthy and happier lives.



Coming Soon >>>

In The Next Issue

Mood Disorder II:
Depression



Depression:
the second most
common mood
disorder



Learn the differ-
ence between a
psychologist and
psychiatrist

Checkout our Intranet Page!
www.mymcallen.net

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For more information visit:
mentalhealth.samhsa.gov
www.mayoclinic.com
www.cpssc.gov

Provider Contact Information

Health Insurance	Blue Cross Blue Shield	800-521-2227
Dental Insurance	Ameritas	800-487-5553
Vision Insurance	Avesis	800-828-9341
Retirement	TMRS	800-924-8677
Basic Life Insurance	Lincoln Financial Group	800-423-2765
Optional Disability Insurance	Lincoln Financial Group	800-423-2765
Optional Flex Spending Acct	JEM Flex	800-943-9179
Optional Life Insurance	Lincoln Financial Group	800-423-2765
Optional Life Insurance	Metropolitan Life	888-467-8907
Optional Life Insurance (Firefighters)	Nationwide	800-381-1978
Optional Retirement	ICMA	800-669-7400
Optional Supplemental Policies	Colonial Life	800-325-4368

As always, the City of McAllen Benefits Department is here to help you in your insurance inquiries as well. We can be reached at 956-681-1400 or by email at benefits@mcallen.net for your convenience.