# The Catholic University of America – Bipolar Disorder

## Overview of Bipolar Disorder:

* Bipolar disorder is characterized by dramatic shifts in an individual’s mood, energy and cognitions.
* Individuals with bipolar disorder experience high and low moods—known as mania and depression—which are different from typical ups-and-downs most people experience
* The average age of onset for Bipolar Disorder is about 25, however, it can begin during teenage years and childhood, though it is unlikely

## Symptoms:

·   Mania: a manic episode is a period of at least one week when a person is very high spirited or irritable in an extreme way for most of the day, has more energy than usual and experiences at least three of the following symptoms:

* Exaggerated self-esteem or grandiosity
* Decreased need for sleep
* Talking more than usual, talking loudly and quickly
* Easily distracted
* Doing many activities at once, scheduling more events in a day than can be reasonably accomplished
* Increased risky behavior (e.g., reckless driving, spending sprees)
* Uncontrollable racing thoughts or quickly changing ideas or topics
* The changes are significant and observable to friends and family. Symptoms are severe enough to cause dysfunction and problems with work, family or social activities and responsibilities.

### ·   **Hypomania:** A hypomanic episode is similar to a manic episode (above) but the symptoms are less severe and need only last four days in a row.

### ·   **Major Depressive Disorder:** A major depressive episode is a period of two weeks in which a person has at least five of the following:

* Intense sadness or despair
* Feeling helpless or hopeless
* Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
* Feeling worthless or guilty
* Sleep problems — sleeping too little or too much
* Feeling restless or agitated (e.g., pacing or hand-wringing), or slowed speech or movements
* Changes in appetite (increase or decrease)

## Types of Bipolar Disorder:

### Bipolar I:

Individuals with Bipolar I have experienced one or more manic episode. Most people diagnosed will have episodes of both mania and depression, though depression is not necessary to receive a Bipolar I diagnosis.

### Bipolar II:

Individuals with Bipolar II have experienced depressive episodes and hypomanic episodes, but have never experienced a “full” manic episode

### Cyclothymic disorder:

Individuals with cyclothymic disorder have experienced many periods of hypomanic and depressive symptoms, but the symptoms never meet the full criteria for hypomania or depression. People with cyclothymia may have brief periods of normal mood, but these periods last fewer than eight weeks.

## **Treatment:** bipolar disorders are treated and managed in several ways including the following:

### Psychotherapy:

Including cognitive behavioral therapy and family-focused therapy

Medications:

* Including mood stabilizers, antipsychotic medications and, to a lesser extent, antidepressants.
* **Self-management strategies***:* education and recognition of early symptoms of an episode
* **Complementary health approaches***:* aerobic exercise, meditation, faith and prayer can support, but not replace, treatment.

Sources

<https://www.nami.org/learn-more/mental-health-conditions/bipolar-disorder>

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/bipolar-disorders/what-are-bipolar-disorders>