

WORLD BIPOLAR DAY

NEWS: March 30 is celebrated worldwide as World Bipolar Day.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Understanding Bipolar Disorder

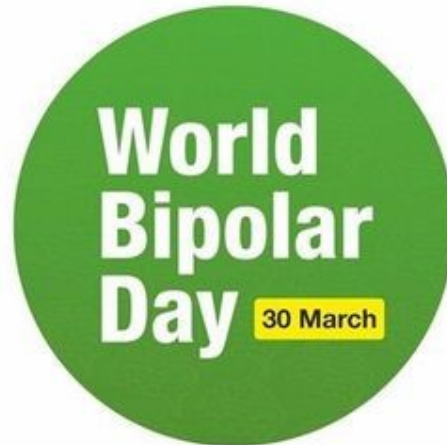
- **Definition:** Bipolar disorder, formerly known as manic depression, is a serious psychiatric condition characterized by **abnormal and recurring shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out daily tasks.**
- **Duration and Impact:** These mood shifts are **not brief or occasional**, but tend to **persist for weeks, months, or even longer**, significantly impairing an individual's social and occupational functioning.

Types and Triggers of Bipolar Episodes

- **Dual Trigger Patterns:** In bipolar disorder,
 - **Negative life events** (e.g., loss, trauma) often lead to **depressive episodes.**
 - **Positive life events**, particularly those involving **goal achievement or success**, may trigger **manic episodes.**

Theme 2025

Bipolar Strong



A global call to highlight the resilience, unity, and strength of people with bipolar disorder. To combat the stigma related to mental health, it encourages individuals to share their experiences and spread awareness.

Major Depressive Episodes

- **Core Symptoms:**
 - Persistent **sadness or low mood** that is difficult to shake.
 - **Anhedonia**, or a lack of interest in previously enjoyable activities.
 - **Low energy** and **easily getting tired**, even without exertion.
 - **Cognitive difficulties**, such as trouble concentrating or making decisions.
 - Feelings of **hopelessness**, **worthlessness**, and **inappropriate guilt**.
 - Episodes may include **crying spells** for no obvious reason.

- **Severe Manifestations:**
 - **Suicidal thoughts or attempts.**
 - **Psychomotor retardation**, where both thinking and physical movement become noticeably slow.
 - The presence of **delusions** (false beliefs) or **hallucinations** (false perceptions).

Manic Episodes

- **Characteristic Features:**
 - A markedly **elevated, expansive, or irritable mood** that is clearly different from the individual's usual state.
 - **Increased energy and inflated self-esteem or grandiosity.**
 - **Decreased need for sleep**, where a person may feel rested after just a few hours.
 - **Rapid or pressured speech**, often difficult to interrupt.
 - The **subjective experience of racing thoughts**, also known as "flight of ideas."
 - Being **easily distracted**, often unable to focus on a single task.
 - Increase in **goal-directed activity**, which may appear excessive or risky.
 - Involvement in **impulsive behaviors** like spending sprees or **sexual indiscretions**.

Clinical Onset and Symptoms

- **Age of Onset:** The first clinical signs of bipolar disorder typically appear **between the ages of 15 and 30**.
- **Warning Signs:**
 - A **family history** of bipolar disorder or related psychiatric conditions.
 - Early onset of **recurrent short depressive phases**.
 - Presence of **ADHD** or **substance misuse**.

- An **abrupt beginning and end of depressive symptoms**.
- **Poor or no response to antidepressants**, which may indicate a bipolar rather than unipolar depression.

Causes and Contributing Factors

Genetic Factors

- Bipolar disorder is a **polygenic and multifactorial condition**, meaning that it involves **multiple genes and environmental triggers**.
- **Genetic inheritance plays a major role**, with about **60–85% of the risk attributed to genetic factors**.
- However, **no single gene** has been definitively linked to the disorder.

Neurochemical Imbalance

- Disruptions in **neurotransmitters** such as **norepinephrine** and **serotonin** may contribute to mood instability in bipolar disorder.

Circadian Dysregulation

- Individuals with bipolar disorder often show **abnormalities in circadian rhythms**, including fluctuations in **body temperature** and **melatonin secretion**.

Sleep Disturbances

- Conditions such as **insomnia** or **irregular sleep patterns** are common and may **trigger or worsen mood episodes**.

Environmental and Stress-related Factors

- **Early developmental experiences** and **life events** play a major role in both triggering and sustaining bipolar disorder symptoms.

Proximal Stressors (Early Life)

- Adverse childhood experiences such as **neglect, abuse, loss of a parent, and exposure to domestic violence** can have lasting effects.

Distal Stressors (Adulthood)

- Traumatic or stressful adult experiences like **financial difficulties, unemployment, bereavement, chronic illness, or violence** can act as triggers.

Chronic Stress and HPA Axis Dysfunction

- Ongoing stress may impair the **hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis**, which regulates stress hormones, leading to a **chronic inflammatory state** affecting both brain and body.

Epigenetic Effects of Childhood Trauma

- Studies have shown that victims of childhood maltreatment may even exhibit **biological changes in sperm**, suggesting a **long-term, possibly intergenerational impact**.

Diagnosis and Progression

- The **average time from the first symptom to an official diagnosis** of bipolar disorder is **between six to ten years**, often due to misdiagnosis or late recognition.
- The condition typically **begins with depressive episodes**, with **manic or hypomanic episodes** appearing later, leading to a confirmed diagnosis.

Treatment Approaches

Pharmacological Treatment

- **Mood stabilizers** like **lithium, valproic acid, and carbamazepine** are commonly used to manage manic symptoms and prevent mood swings.
- **Antidepressants**, though sometimes prescribed, are **not usually used alone** in bipolar disorder due to the risk of **triggering manic episodes or rapid mood cycling**.

Psychotherapy

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** helps patients **recognize and correct negative thought patterns**, improve emotional regulation, and develop better coping strategies.
- **Interpersonal and Social Rhythm Therapy (IPSRT)** focuses on **establishing consistent daily routines** such as regular meals, exercise, and sleep schedules to stabilize mood fluctuations.

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

- In **severe or treatment-resistant cases**, **ECT** may be considered. This involves **brief electrical stimulation of the brain** under anesthesia and has been effective in cases where medications or talk therapy fail.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/world-bipolar-day-2023-history-theme-and-significance/articleshow/99106976.cms>