

# **YOUR GUIDE TO SPOTTING & DISCUSSING BIPOLAR RELAPSE**

## **Is this a bipolar relapse?**

If someone you love is living with bipolar I disorder (BPI), it's important to monitor how they're feeling.

The following quiz can help you identify potential warning signs of bipolar relapse, which means a person's symptoms may get worse.



Have you recently seen any significant changes in mood/behaviour?  
(such as higher energy level/confidence, trouble settling down to study or work, strong feelings or disagreements, or impulsive decision-making)

**Yes**      **No**

Have you observed too little or too much sleep?

**Yes**      **No**

Have you noticed any changes in alcohol/drug use?

**Yes**      **No**

Have you seen any signs of anxiety lately?

**Yes**      **No**

Have any other friends or family members mentioned a change in demeanour?

**Yes**      **No**

If you answered **yes to any of the questions**, this may be an early sign of bipolar relapse.

**Consider taking this Spotting & Discussing Relapse Guide to the next psychiatrist appointment.**

Mood shifts in BPI can seem unpredictable. You may feel overwhelmed when helping someone with this illness, but rest assured—you, your loved one, and their psychiatrist can work together to find a treatment plan to help manage BPI.

**Find out how to keep supporting your loved one on the next pages.**

**Don't wait to talk with your loved one if you think they might be showing early signs of bipolar relapse. There are treatment options available to help manage BPI.**

## Discussing bipolar I disorder with your loved one

Once you've noticed some possible signs of relapse, starting a conversation about BPI might seem difficult. However, there are strategies you can use to facilitate communication and support their treatment journey.



- **Remember that not everyone has the same needs.** Try not to be patronizing or overprotective.
- **Determine how involved you need to be.** Consider the level of support you can realistically provide. If possible, mention to your loved one that you would like to help, but do not want to be intrusive.
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Having conversations about BPI early on may help you and your loved one manage their condition.



- Invite your loved one to share their thoughts and feelings about their illness. Be open and listen to what they have to say.
  - Ask your loved one what you can do to help in circumstances when they are feeling overwhelmed.
  - Lean on your loved one's psychiatrist. They will encourage your loved one to actively participate in their own treatment planning and share in decision-making.
- **Help them deal with disappointment.** Patients with BPI may experience frustration if they have relapsed, for example. You can support them by listening, encouraging them to stay hopeful, and reminding them that bipolar relapse is not their fault.
  - **Stay calm.** If your loved one is going through bipolar relapse, it is best to communicate calmly and avoid emotional reactions, such as raising your voice.

**Make sure your loved one is on the most suitable treatment plan for them.  
Talk to their psychiatrist.**

## How to help manage bipolar I disorder

It may be stressful to think about the future when your loved one is facing BPI, but management *is* possible. A long-term treatment plan can help people with BPI manage their symptoms, which in turn can help them return to and/or continue participating in activities such as socializing, and going to school or work.



There is no single treatment that is right for everybody, so each patient and their psychiatrist will work together to find suitable medication and lifestyle choices for their situation.

Some medications for BPI can help manage or treat the symptoms of depression and/or mania associated with this disease, while others reduce the risk and frequency of symptom relapse.

## BPI medication options to consider



**Oral medications** can be prescribed for both acute and maintenance treatment, and are taken every day, once a day or more, depending on the chosen medication.

**Long-acting injectable medication** options are also available for maintenance treatment.

These injections are given in the buttocks or in the upper arm/shoulder, and they need to be administered by a nurse or doctor every month or every 2 weeks, depending on the chosen medication.



Regardless of the chosen medication, it is important to keep taking it as prescribed, even when feeling well.

All treatments have side effects. Talk to your loved one's psychiatrist for complete medication information.

# Bipolar I disorder: Unpredictable doesn't have to mean unmanageable

If you answered **yes to any of the questions on page 1**, take this **Spotting & Discussing Relapse Guide** to the next psychiatrist appointment.

## Next appointments

Date	Doctor	Notes

Remember, it's incredibly important to take the time to ensure you have the right resources to support **you** while you support someone else.

Here are a few Canadian organizations dedicated to providing information and support to people living with bipolar disorder:

- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA): <https://www.dbsalliance.org>
- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA): <https://cmha.ca>
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): <https://www.camh.ca>

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Visit **bipolarandme.ca**  
for more resources



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