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## Risk Factors for Major Changes in Mood

- Type of medications used for depression (tricyclic antidepressants and venlafaxine)<sup>3</sup>
- Bipolar I disorder<sup>3</sup>
- History of suicide attempts<sup>3</sup>
- Had bipolar disorder at a younger age<sup>4</sup>

## What is bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a mental disorder that causes changes in mood, energy, activity levels, focus, and results in difficulty in being able to carry out day-to-day tasks. Individuals with bipolar disorder may experience high mood or mood switches which is also called, “mania.” There are 3 types of bipolar disorder: bipolar I disorder, bipolar II disorder, and cyclothymic disorder.<sup>1</sup>

- Bipolar I disorder – periods of high mood that last for a week or symptoms that are so severe that the person needs to go to the hospital. Periods of sadness may happen as well.<sup>1</sup>
- Bipolar II disorder – periods of less severe high mood which last for more than four days and symptoms of sadness that are not typical in bipolar disorder I.<sup>1</sup>
- Cyclothymic disorder – periods of less high mood as well as periods of sadness which last for at least 2 years.<sup>1</sup>

Medications that can be used to treat bipolar disorder include mood stabilizers and antipsychotics. Antidepressants may be used in the treatment of bipolar disorder, but they are not typically recommended due to risk of causing mania.

## When are antidepressants used in individuals living with bipolar disorder?

Individuals with bipolar disorder may be treated with antidepressants if they have other mental disorders such as difficulties with a traumatic event and anxiety. A medication that balances mood should be used with an antidepressant.<sup>2</sup>

## Why are antidepressants not used alone in individuals living with bipolar disorder?

There is not sufficient data for using medications for depression in individuals living with bipolar disorder. This can place individuals at risk for major changes in mood or “treatment-emergent mania.”<sup>3</sup>

## What are signs and symptoms of mania?

- Feeling very “up,” “high,” or irritable or touchy<sup>1</sup>
- Having a decreased need for sleep<sup>1</sup>
- Talking very fast about a lot of different things<sup>1</sup>
- Feeling like thoughts are racing<sup>1</sup>
- Risk-taking behavior<sup>1</sup>
- Feeling unusually important, talented, or powerful<sup>1</sup>
- Thinking about doing a lot of things all at once<sup>1</sup>

## What should individuals living with bipolar disorder do if they experience major changes in mood after starting an antidepressant?

If individuals living with bipolar disorder have any of these symptoms, then please contact a mental health provider.

### Key Reminders

When using an antidepressant, it is important to speak with your mental health provider and weigh the risks and benefits of the medication. If your provider prescribes you an antidepressant, then it is important to have a drug that can balance mood, or a mood stabilizer. If you are taking an antidepressant, then make sure to watch for symptoms of mania such as elevated mood, decreased need for sleep, being more talkative, racing thoughts, and risk-taking behaviors.



Go online to find more information and to view the references for this toolkit.

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