



Pediatric Bipolar Disorder: Signs & Symptoms

Bipolar disorder in children is characterized by symptoms of elevated mood and depression that is out of the ordinary in relation to their developmental stage. In children, bipolar disorder is often misdiagnosed as behavior problems or missed when it coexists with other behavioral disorders.

Be sure to talk with your doctor if your child is displaying some of the following symptoms:



Mood swings. Take note of abrupt changes in mood, periods of hyperactivity followed by lethargy, intense temper tantrums, bouts of extreme frustration, and displays of defiant behavior and share your concerns with your pediatrician.



Symptoms of mania in children. Increased activity, agitation, distractibility, and talkativeness above and beyond what you have normally observed in your child can be an indication of a manic episode.



Symptoms of depression in children. Children often have trouble describing emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, making it difficult for them to articulate depression. If your child displays increased levels of irritability or boredom, he or she may be experiencing a depressive episode.



Rapid cycling. Children with bipolar disorder tend to move from mania to depression much more quickly than adults, sometimes cycling through moods several times within the same day. If you notice that your child's emotions and activity levels are drastically different from day to day or hour to hour, be sure to ask your doctor about a bipolar disorder evaluation.



Chronic irritability. Children are not as equipped to naturally regulate emotions as adults are. When a child has bipolar disorder, severe cycling between moods can result in long periods of irritability.

Starting treatment early is crucial since children with bipolar disorder may experience more severe symptoms and more frequent episodes over their lifetimes than people who develop the disorder as adults. They are also at a higher risk of developing substance abuse issues and have a higher rate of attempted suicide.

For more on this topic, visit the Knowledge Center at www.isbd.org.