



Bipolar Disorder and Substance Abuse

⚠️ RISK FACTORS ⚠️

Early exposure is a major factor.

Experimentation with substances at young ages can mask early symptoms of bipolar disorder. Since bipolar disorder and substance use disorder often begin during adolescence or young adulthood, it can be difficult to pinpoint which disorder developed first.

Gender matters. In general, men with bipolar disorder have a higher instance of developing substance abuse problems. However, women with bipolar disorder are more likely to abuse alcohol.

Education, education, education. People with lower levels of education are often more susceptible to addiction because they are unaware of the interconnected risks associated with mental disorders and substance use.

Other psychiatric disorders contribute.

People struggling with additional mental illnesses are more likely to attempt to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol. In particular, anxiety disorders pose the greatest added risk.

Mood may dictate substance use patterns.

During a manic episode, people tend to favor amphetamines and often combine more than one substance. When depressed, people are more likely to turn to alcohol.

People with bipolar disorder are at a greater risk of developing long-term drug and/or alcohol problems. Substance use often worsens symptoms, negatively impacts response to prescribed drugs, and affects the way you experience bipolar disorder.



You are more likely to...

- have increased depressive episodes.
- endure longer manic and depressive episodes.
- engage in risk behaviors like overspending or sexual indiscretions.
- be hospitalized more frequently and for longer periods of time.
- hurt yourself and others.
- attempt suicide multiple times.

Drug and/or alcohol misuse may pose additional risks to your physical and mental health when those substances interact with your prescriptions.

Always be honest with your care providers about all substances you are using to avoid lethal consequences.

For more topics, visit the Knowledge Center at www.isbd.org.