



Bipolar Disorder and Metabolic Disorders

“Metabolic disorders” is a catch-all phrase that refers to being overweight, obese, having high cholesterol and triglycerides, high blood pressure, and/or type II diabetes. People who have bipolar disorder are at a higher risk for developing metabolic disorders when compared to people without bipolar.

COMPLICATIONS CREATED WHEN BIPOLAR & METABOLIC DISORDERS COLLIDE

This cluster of health problems can put you at higher risk of developing serious physical illnesses and can complicate your psychiatric condition as well. People with both bipolar disorder and metabolic issues may face the following challenges:

- ◆ Heart disease
- ◆ Some forms of cancer
- ◆ Reduced quality of life
- ◆ Difficulty functioning in daily activities
- ◆ Trouble maintaining interpersonal relationships
- ◆ Employment problems
- ◆ More frequent mood episodes
- ◆ Decreased motivation and interest in activities
- ◆ Higher instances of depression
- ◆ Bipolar symptoms can be less responsive to treatment
- ◆ Cognitive difficulties, including the ability to think, concentrate, make decisions, and plan/organize

RISK FACTORS

Some factors that increase your chances of developing metabolic disorders can be controlled with behavior changes; others are simply biology.

- ◆ Poor dietary choices
- ◆ Increased smoking
- ◆ Low physical activity
- ◆ Medication side-effects
- ◆ Access to healthcare providers
- ◆ Stressful life events and experiences (ex. child abuse)
- ◆ Money problems
- ◆ Living in high crime neighborhoods
- ◆ Employment issues
- ◆ Biological factors
 - * Increased immune/inflammatory activation
 - * Changes in stress hormones, cortisol, insulin, and adrenaline system.
 - * Sleep disturbances



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Prevention and Treatment

-  **Be aware.** Knowing that you are at a greater risk of developing metabolic disorders because of your bipolar diagnosis can help you prevent it, and prevention is key.
-  **Maintain a healthy diet.** A balanced diet with a caloric intake that is appropriate for your gender, age, and body type is very important. Work with your doctor to craft a nutritional plan that is right for you.
-  **Exercise.** Engage in some physical, aerobic activity (e.g. walking, running, biking) as often as you can.
-  **Make sleep a priority.** Obtaining and maintaining a normal sleep schedule is absolutely critical for your general wellbeing and stability of your bipolar symptoms. Sleep health is also crucial in warding off metabolic problems.
-  **Weigh your medication options.** Talk to your doctor about medications for bipolar disorder that are less likely to cause or worsen metabolic disorders and explore making changes in your treatment plan.
-  **Manage other conditions.** Binge eating disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and hypothyroidism are just a few of the other conditions that are also associated with metabolic disorders. Work with your doctor to make sure all of these issues are kept in check.
-  **Schedule regular check-ups.** Ask your healthcare provider to evaluate you every 6 to 12 months for metabolic problems.
-  **Seek information.** Scientific evidence indicates that metabolic problems related to bipolar disorder are very treatable with advocacy/support groups, behavioral management, education, and, in some cases, medication. Depending on your region and country, there may be specific resources available to people with bipolar disorder and metabolic problems.