

Do You Have Bipolar Disorder or Know Someone Who Does?

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to function. Different from the normal ups and downs that everyone goes through, the symptoms of bipolar disorder are severe and potentially life threatening if untreated.

Bipolar disorder typically develops in late adolescence or early adulthood. However, some people have their first symptoms during childhood, and some develop them late in life. It is often not recognized as an illness, and people may suffer for years before it is properly diagnosed and treated. Like diabetes or heart disease, bipolar disorder is a long-term illness that must be carefully managed throughout a person's life.



What is STEP-BD?

The Systematic Treatment Enhancement Program for Bipolar Disorder (STEP-BD) is a long-term study (5 years) that aims to find out which treatments, or combinations of treatments, are most effective for treating episodes of depression and mania and for preventing recurrent episodes. By learning about your experience with bipolar disorder, your treatment response, and your quality of life during treatment, STEP-BD researchers can help you design a plan for managing your illness that works best for you. At the same time, your participation in STEP-BD will help improve treatment standards for the more than 2 million other Americans with bipolar disorder.

A total of 5,000 participants with bipolar disorder are needed at approximately 20 sites across the United States. STEP-BD is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the government agency responsible for research on mental disorders and their treatment.



Who Is Eligible for STEP-BD?

Almost anyone who is 15 years or older and has bipolar disorder can join STEP-BD. You can participate even if you have more than one mental disorder diagnosis, or if you have a physical illness. You can also participate if you have been previously treated with study medications or therapies, or if you have never before been in treatment. Individuals younger than 18 need permission from a parent or legal guardian. Participation is entirely voluntary, and your privacy and confidentiality are protected.

What Kinds of Treatment Does STEP-BD Offer?

STEP-BD offers people with bipolar disorder continuity of care. If you join STEP-BD, you will receive a thorough formal evaluation of your illness, symptoms, and treatment history. And your illness will be managed long-term.

You can choose either to stay on your current treatment plan or to change treatments at any time during the study. Most treatments currently used for bipolar disorder, including medications and “talk” therapies, are being investigated in STEP-BD. These treatments are all approved and used by doctors. However, doctors are uncertain which of these treatments actually work best. This is what STEP-BD – with your help – is designed to find out.

You also may choose to participate in “randomized” studies within STEP-BD. In these studies, treatments are assigned to participants.

All participants may stay on mood-stabilizing medication. No one will be given placebo-only treatment (i.e., just sugar pills).

A psychiatrist who has received special training in bipolar disorder, along with a team of clinical specialists, will manage and monitor your treatment in STEP-BD. All treatments are provided in accordance with current best practice guidelines. You will not be given treatments that you have had bad reactions to in the past.

Does STEP-BD Cost Anything?

Participation in STEP-BD may not cost any more than usual care for bipolar disorder. Under certain conditions, some treatments will be provided at no cost or at a reduced cost. Otherwise, you will need to pay for treatment as you do currently – for example, through your insurance company or third-party payer.



**The Systematic Treatment Enhancement Program for Bipolar Disorder (STEP-BD):
A treatment-effectiveness study sponsored by
the National Institute of Mental Health**

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How Can Someone Learn More About STEP-BD?

There are several ways to find out more about STEP-BD.

- **Call Toll Free:**

1-866-240-3250
- **Visit the STEP-BD web page:**

www.stepbd.org
- **Contact the STEP-BD coordinating center:**

STEP-BD
Clinical Coordinating Center
Massachusetts General Hospital
Two Longfellow Place, Suite 200
Boston, MA 02114
Phone: 1-866-240-3250

- **Contact your local site:**

Mood Disorders Center
Portland VA Medical Center
3710 SW US Veterans Hospital Rd
P3MHDC
Portland, OR, 97239
Phone: (503) 220-3483 ext. 54522
www.portland-mood-disorders-center.org

Largest NIMH



**Treatment Study of
Bipolar Disorder**