

Living With Bipolar Depression

(NAPSA)—The more you know about a condition such as bipolar disorder, and in particular the depressive episodes of the condition, the better able you may be to manage it if you or someone you care about is ever among the estimated 8 million American adults who may be living with the disorder.

Unlike ordinary sadness or loss, bipolar depression is persistent and can significantly interfere with thoughts, activity and physical health. Overall, most people with the disorder experience depressive episodes three times more often than manic episodes.

If not controlled, bipolar depression can affect a person's ability to do normal, day-to-day activities. Therefore, it's important to talk to your health care provider to develop a treatment plan that is appropriate for you. This may include medication, counseling and exercise.

"When people think about bipolar disorder they tend to forget how debilitating the depressive episodes of the disease can be," explains Janet Taylor, M.D., MPH, clinical instructor of psychiatry at Columbia University-affiliated Harlem Hospital. "For people with this problem, managing the depressive symptoms, such as prolonged periods of sadness and loss of energy, may require ongoing support from a medical professional as well as family and friends."

If you think you are experiencing these symptoms, or are currently on treatment for bipolar dis-

order, it's important to keep a few things in mind:

- Talk to family and friends. Be honest with yourself. If something doesn't feel right, acknowledge it and discuss your feelings of ongoing sadness with loved ones. They may be able to help.

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**—Dr. Janet Taylor of
Columbia University-affiliated
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- Maintain healthy habits. Get regular sleep, eat well, allow time for physical activity and avoid alcohol because this may aggravate your symptoms.

- Plan "me" time. Do activities that make you happy. Spend time with friends, read a book, go to dinner, volunteer or reconnect with your childhood and build a snowman this winter.

- Talk to your doctor. If you are currently on medication, continue working with your doctor to refine your treatment plan. If current treatment is not working, be open and honest with your doctor to make adjustments and get the appropriate treatment in place. If you're new to therapy, it's important to speak with your doctor to assess your treatment plan on an ongoing basis.

For more information, on bipolar depression, talk to your doctor, and visit www.facingbipolar.com.