



BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

October 2021

What is obsessive-compulsive disorder?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder involves persistent and intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive actions (compulsions). The DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition) defines obsessions as recurrent and persistent thoughts, urges, or impulses that are experienced as intrusive and unwanted, with associated anxiety or distress. The individual attempts to suppress these obsessions by performing a compulsion; repetitive behaviours (e.g., hand washing, ordering, checking) or thoughts (e.g., praying, counting, repeating words). The obsessions or compulsions are time-consuming and can cause significant impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning. Related disorders include hoarding disorder, excoriation disorder (skin-picking), body dysmorphic disorder (obsessive focus on a perceived flaw in appearance) and trichotillomania (hair-pulling).

What is the evidence for obsessive-compulsive disorder in people with bipolar disorder?

Moderate quality evidence suggests the lifetime prevalence of obsessive-compulsive disorder in people with bipolar disorder is around 11% compared to 2.5% in the general population. This represents a large increased risk of obsessive-compulsive disorder in people with bipolar disorder. The lifetime prevalence of obsessive-compulsive disorder in children and adolescents with bipolar disorder is around 17%, with adolescents showing higher rates of obsessive-compulsive disorder than children.

The current prevalence rate is also around 11% in people with bipolar disorder compared to 1.6% in the general population. The current prevalence rate during euthymia in people with bipolar disorder is around 7%.

The antipsychotic aripiprazole plus mood stabilizers may be effective therapy for obsessive-compulsive symptoms during manic episodes. The glutamate modulators topiramate or memantine plus mood-stabilizers may also relieve obsessive-compulsive symptoms during manic episodes.

For more information see the technical table



NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about bipolar disorder or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at neura.edu.au.