



BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

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What is childhood bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a chronic psychiatric illness that can have devastating effects on afflicted individuals and their families. It is the sixth leading cause of disability worldwide, and prevalence is estimated to be around 1% in the general adult population. The age of onset of bipolar disorder typically occurs during late adolescence or early adulthood, although onset can occur in childhood. Early-onset bipolar disorder is commonly associated with impairment in multiple domains, including increased risk of psychiatric hospitalisation, antisocial behaviour, addictions and suicidal behaviour. The need to optimise treatments for these patients for whom medication could be long-term and associated with adverse side effects, has increased the interest in the role of psychological treatments.

What is the evidence for psychosocial treatments for childhood bipolar disorder?

Moderate to low quality evidence suggests cognitive behavioural therapy, education, and family therapies may improve mood symptoms and increase knowledge about the disorder in children or youth with bipolar disorder. More research is needed to assess Interpersonal Social Rhythms Therapy and Dialectical Behavioural Therapy.

For further information see the technical table

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