



BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

November 2021

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

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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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.