



Image: © pict rider - stock.adobe.com

BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

March 2022

How is age at onset important to people with bipolar disorder?

Age at onset of bipolar disorder varies between around 18 and 30 years. Differences observed in the age at onset may be influenced by genetic or environmental risk factors, or sex. Understanding the factors that impact on age at the onset of symptoms could lead to better understanding of the risk factors for the disorder and earlier and improved intervention strategies for patients.

What is the evidence for age at onset?

Moderate quality evidence suggests the median age at onset of bipolar disorder is around 33 years old. Moderate to high quality evidence finds a trimodal distribution, with 45% of people with bipolar disorder showing an early-onset age (~17 years), 35% showing a mid-onset age (~26 years), and 20% showing a late-onset age (~42 years).

High quality evidence shows early age at onset is associated with increased severity of depression. Moderate to high quality evidence finds early age at onset is associated with having a personality disorder or longer delays to treatment. Moderate quality evidence finds early age at onset is associated with suicide attempts, anxiety disorder, substance use disorder, or alcohol use disorders.

There were no associations between early age at onset and severity of mania symptoms, first polarity being mania, psychotic symptoms, rapid cycling or mixed bipolar episodes.

For more information see the technical table



NeuRA
Discover. Conquer. Cure.

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.