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BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

October 2021

What are anxiety disorders?

Generalised anxiety disorder is characterised by continuous and excessive worrying for six months or more. Specific phobias are characterised by anxiety provoked by a feared object or situation, resulting in avoidance. Social phobia is anxiety provoked by social or performance situations. Agoraphobia is anxiety about situations where escape may be difficult or where help might not be available. Panic disorder is characterised by a panic attack, which is a distinct episode where a person experiences sudden apprehension and fearfulness, and may experience shortness of breath, palpitations, chest pain or feeling of choking.

What is the evidence for anxiety in people with bipolar disorder?

Moderate quality evidence found the lifetime prevalence of anxiety disorders in children, adolescents, and adults with bipolar disorder is around 45%, and the prevalence in adults in the euthymic phase of the disorder is around 35%. These rates are significantly higher than in people without bipolar disorder. The most common anxiety disorders in adults were generalised and social anxiety disorders, agoraphobia, specific phobias, and panic disorders. The most common anxiety disorders in children were generalised and separation anxiety disorders. The most common anxiety disorders in adolescents were panic disorder and social phobia.

Moderate to low quality evidence found cognitive behavioural therapy was effective for improving symptoms of anxiety in people with bipolar disorder.



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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.

For more information see the technical table

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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