

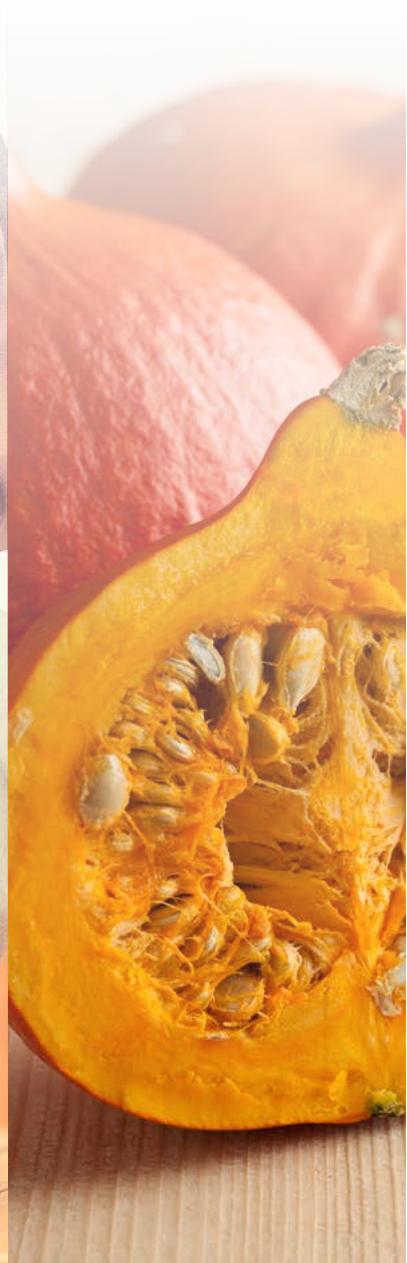


**gems**

Government Employees  
Medical Scheme

# Bipolar Mood Disorder Care Programme

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## BIPOLAR MOOD DISORDER CARE PROGRAMME

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### WHAT IS BIPOLAR MOOD DISORDER?

Bipolar Mood Disorder (BMD), also known as manic depressive illness or affective bipolar disorder, is a serious chronic illness that causes extreme changes in mood, energy and behaviour.

People are usually diagnosed with BMD when they are teenagers or young adults and the condition needs to be managed for the rest of their lives.

For a person with BMD, a 'high' mood can quickly change into a 'low' one, which causes the sufferer exceptional stress. These extreme mood swings often disrupt work, school, family and social life.

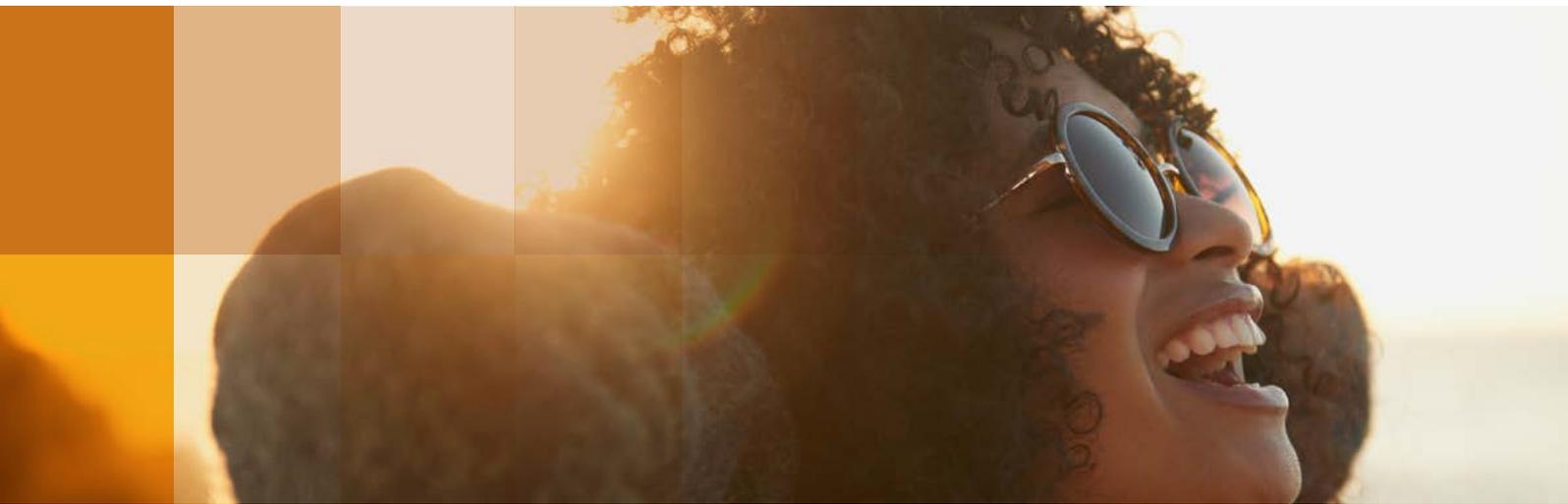
#### The four main types of episodes experienced are:

**Depression** Extreme sadness and hopelessness which can continue for long periods of time.

**Mania** Feelings of a 'high' and extreme happiness or irritability and anger. People in this phase may display risky behaviour.

**Hypomania** Feelings of happiness that do not have a negative effect on work and family. The person is able to 'get things done'. Hypomania is a milder form of mania, but this stage can easily change into mania or depression.

**Mixed mood** The person's mood can change quickly between mania and depression, sometimes in the same day.



### What causes Bipolar Mood Disorder (BMD)?

The exact cause of BMD is not known but certain genetic and psychological factors have been found to increase the risk of developing the illness.

## TREATMENT AND CARE PROGRAMME

### Bipolar Care Programme Process

- We want to form a partnership with you, your doctor and any other healthcare service providers involved in your treatment.
- We will help you to manage your illness.
- One of our registered nurses will contact you from time to time to discuss your health and any problems that you may be experiencing.
- We will also provide you with information and educational material about BMD.

### Treatment of BMD

You, your family and doctor will need to work out a personal treatment plan. This usually includes medicine, counselling and lifestyle changes.

*It is important to understand that this is a lifelong illness and cannot be cured, but it can be managed by following the correct treatment.*

Your prescribed medicine may be for one drug or a combination of two to three drugs. Everyone is different and it may take some time for your doctor to find the correct dosage to control your illness.

Maintaining good control of BMD requires regular visits to your doctor and regular blood tests to determine the blood levels of your medicine.

Remember to follow your treatment plan! If you stop the medicine or take it erratically the symptoms will come back in full force.

Please discuss any side effects that you think may be caused by the medicine with your doctor.

## HOW DO YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN YOUR TREATMENT?

The most important guideline for self-care is to establish a good relationship with your doctor. It is important to see your doctor regularly for check-ups. The results of the blood tests taken at your check-ups will guide your doctor in managing your treatment.

It is important that you feel comfortable discussing health and treatment issues with your doctor.

### Things to remember

1. Follow your treatment plan.
2. Do not stop your treatment unless your doctor tells you to stop.
3. Any medicine can cause certain side effects. Always discuss these with your doctor.
4. Always discuss non-prescriptive medicine (including herbal) with a pharmacist.
5. Ask your family and friends for support. You will need a good social and emotional support system at home, school or at work that understands your illness, treatment and mood changes.
6. Consider joining a support group.
7. Become aware of your mood states and particularly early signs of mood relapses.

## LIVING WITH BMD

A healthy body is important for a healthy mind.

### **Eat balanced meals**

Healthy eating should be interesting and enjoyable. Your diet should provide you with enough nutrients (proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins, water) and energy to meet your individual needs.

Make sure that your portions are not too large and control your intake of fats, salt and sugar. Include more fruits, vegetables and fibre in your diet if you suffer from constipation. Drink plenty of water.

Avoid artificial stimulants and depressants.

***Coffee, alcohol and recreational drugs can cause your bipolar medicine not to work and should be avoided.***

### **Exercise**

Regular exercise improves your quality of life and is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. It helps you to relax and feel better.

Exercise improves glucose metabolism, lowers blood pressure and helps you to maintain a healthy weight.



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Visit [www.gems.gov.za](http://www.gems.gov.za) for more information  
or call us on **0860 00 4367**

If you would like more information about Bipolar Mood Disorder, please do not hesitate to call us on the **GEMS MEMBER CARE LINE 0860 109 900**.

Always discuss all health and treatment issues with your **doctor**.

Please note that this information provided by our Registered Healthcare Professionals is for educational, communication and information purposes only and is not intended to replace or represent medical advice or treatment.