

Food and Mood:

Secrets to Managing Mood Swings, Food and Weight

By Sarah Freeman

This Special Report explains the connection between food and mood and asks "Is your medication making you fat?" It lists specific Bipolar Super foods that help stabilize moods and warns you about the exact foods to avoid. It concludes with a discussion of diabetes and bipolar disorder - people with bipolar disorder are up to 3 times more likely to develop diabetes - and explains how the same healthy eating that protects you from diabetes will also help manage mood swings and control weight.

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The Food/Mood Connection

Is there a connection between food and mood? You bet there is! For people with bipolar disorder, this connection is particularly important. We tend to have heightened sensitivity to unhealthy foods such as refined carbohydrates and saturated fats, and the more we eat these unwholesome foods, the more frequent and severe will be the mood swings that result.

Three things you need to know:

1. Dr Fred Goodwin and Dr Kay Redfield Jamison have described a pattern of reactive hypoglycemia in people with bipolar disorder. Reactive hypoglycemia is low blood sugar that occurs 1-3 hours after a meal. The symptoms include fatigue, depression, anxiety, irritability, craving sweets, poor concentration and confusion, panic attacks, clumsiness, pounding or racing heart, numbness or coldness in the extremities, and outburst of rage. The solution? Eat in a way that stabilizes insulin and blood sugar as much as possible!
2. A 2009 study showed that people with bipolar disorder are 1.5 - 2 times more likely to die from physical diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes than are members of the general population. Heart disease, hypertension and diabetes are all at epidemic proportions in developed countries like the US anyway. For people with bipolar disorder, it is twice as urgent to follow a food and exercise plan that will manage these risks!
3. Research has shown that people with bipolar disorder tend to be more likely than other members of the public to suffer from deficiencies in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin B12, folic acid, and vitamin C. It is easy to adjust your diet so that you consume more of these critical nutrients, or obtain them from an affordable daily multivitamin.

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A Bipolar Diet?

Is there really such a thing as a bipolar diet? Research reveals how foods can affect mood, brain function, and every other aspect of emotional and physical health.

There ARE specific foods with proven benefits to our mental, emotional and physical health, and for folks with bipolar disorder, these are what we need to build our diet around -- the bipolar super foods:

Some of the Bipolar Super Foods

- Coldwater fish
- Berries
- Avocados
- Olive oil

-- and then there are those foods that should be eaten in moderation, or avoided all together -- the dirty dozen:

Some Culprits Listed in "The Dirty Dozen"

- Heavily sweetened breakfast cereals
- Saturated fats and trans fats
- Ice cream
- Salad dressing.

For the complete lists and an explanation of exactly which foods will help, and which will hinder, discover [The Bipolar Diet](#) in detail.

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Is Your Medication Making You Fat?

One of the most common barriers to recovery is non-compliance with taking medication. In fact, in working with people with manic-depressive illness, I have reached the point where every day now I hear the same story from either someone under treatment or their spouse – “Everything was fine until I/he/she stopped taking the meds”.

Now I do not for one moment believe that people with bipolar disorder are stupid, and that they do not understand the relationship between taking meds and staying well. In fact, it is well accepted that folks with bipolar disorder tend to be, if anything, smarter than the average bear. My belief is that for the most part, these wonderful people are not making naïve, capricious or irresponsible decisions. I suspect that for many of us, we go off our meds because we have performed our own personal cost/benefit analysis and decided that because we are managing better we can afford to risk an episode in exchange for a period of relief from medication side effects.

And as vain or shallow as it may sound to the uninitiated, the number one side effect that many of us hate the most is weight gain.

Nearly every effective medication for bipolar disorder has weight gain as a side effect. However, it is important to remember that not everyone taking a particular drug will experience side effects. NEVER let the fear of a particular side effect prevent you from trying a medication that your doctor (ideally an experienced psychiatrist with specific expertise in bipolar disorder) believes could be helpful for you. The fact is that we all respond differently to the various mood stabilizers and other medications, and some folks will never gain an ounce. However, weight gain is extremely common, and if you are unhappy with your current weight, it may be relevant for you to ask “Is my

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medication making me fat?" If the weight gain began at the same time as you started taking the meds, the answer is probably yes.

However, in the US and other developed countries, we are in the middle of an obesity epidemic. The issues around weight and bipolar disorder are complex and interrelated. Understanding what is going on in relation to your own weight gain, and turning things around, is going to take concentration and dedicated effort.

Did you start to gain weight before commencing medications? There is no shame in it if you did. In fact, it puts you in the majority. 70% of American men and over 60% of women are overweight, and approximately one third of the US population is obese – and it just gets worse every year. Some research has been done on whether people with bipolar disorder start off being heavier than the general population, even before diagnosis and treatment, but the results have been mixed. What we do know is that after being diagnosed and treated, weight management is a huge issue for the bipolar population, with 35% of people with bipolar disorder being obese! This is the highest percentage of any psychiatric illness!

I get more questions about meds and weight gain than anything else, and I KNOW that many people quit taking their medication because they find the weight gain to be so extremely demoralizing. Much as I sympathize with this (and believe me – I do – after gaining over 40 pounds I did it myself) it is NOT the answer. Instead, use [The Bipolar Diet](#) to learn about the weight gain/loss implications of the various meds that are used to treat bipolar disorder, and the strategies you can use to maintain your weight at a healthy level where you can feel good about yourself.

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Supplements for Bipolar?

Every day I get messages on the [Bipolar-Lives](#) website, asking advice about treating bipolar disorder with vitamins and nutritional supplements instead of medication. It seems many people prefer the idea of taking something “natural”. Also, as many of us have discovered through years of unpleasant trial and error, the side effects of bipolar meds are no fun, and it is easy to understand why some people seek to avoid taking these drugs.

In my experience, medication is life-saving and usually a necessity. Some very mild cases of Bipolar II (and I mean VERY MILD – the softest of soft bipolar) may be effectively treated through diet and lifestyle alone, but only an experienced clinician could advise you on that. Following [The Bipolar Diet](#) is intended to promote stable moods, protect against unwanted medication side effects such as weight gain, and promote greater physical and mental health overall – it is not a substitute for professional care and medication.

The natural health industry is a multi-billion dollar corporate monster in just the same way as Big-Pharma is. Also, because their products are not FDA approved, many misleading claims abound, and it is easy to waste time and money on products that are long on hype and short on science. Don't get me wrong – I am NOT opposed to natural approaches – the whole premise of this book is that people suffering from manic-depressive illness can dramatically improve their mental AND physical health through wise nutritional approaches and supplementing with PROVEN natural supplements. I know because I have done it. I am living proof! However, I would be ashamed to admit how much money I have wasted over the years on supplements that did no good, or that actually made my episodes worse. Today I am very careful to make sure there is reliable research on ANY vitamin, herb, or other supplement I put in my body.

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The real tragedy is that some supplements do show great promise for treating depression and even mania, but because they cannot be patented and turned into zillion-dollar cash cows, usually there is just not enough interest to conduct enough rigorous scientific studies to prove their effectiveness. Based on the evidence, [The Bipolar Diet](#) includes suggestions of what to try, and what to AVOID! Supplements discussed in detail include:

- 5-HTP
- Choline
- Folic acid
- GABA
- Inositol
- Magnesium
- Multivitamin and mineral supplements
- Omega-3 (fish oil)
- SAMe
- St. John's Wort
- Taurine
- Tyrosine
- Vitamin B12
- Vitamin C
- Zinc.

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A Diabetes/Bipolar Connection?

Diabetes and bipolar disorder are co-morbid conditions. This means they often coexist, with many people having both bipolar disorder AND diabetes. Research indicates that this more than an unfortunate coincidence. Some studies have shown people with bipolar disorder are up to THREE TIMES more likely to have diabetes than members of the general population. Also, there is evidence that people with bipolar disorder and diabetes are more likely to face other health challenges such as being more prone to rapid cycling, and more likely to have chronic, as opposed to milder, mood episodes. There may be other negative lifestyle consequences as well. One Canadian study found that 81% of bipolar people with diabetes were receiving disability payments, versus 30% of bipolar patients without diabetes. ALL PEOPLE DIAGNOSED WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER SHOULD IMMEDIATELY HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE PHYSICAL EXAM TO CHECK FOR THE PRESENCE OF COMMON COMORBID CONDITIONS, ESPECIALLY DIABETES.

Bipolar meds and diabetes

Several medications used to treat bipolar disorder can cause significant weight gain, insulin resistance, and hyperglycemia. The drug most associated with contributing to diabetes is Zyprexa. Seroquel and Risperdal have also been linked to the development of diabetes. Ask your doctor if you can try the bipolar medications that don't cause pre-diabetes (metabolic syndrome) first.

Why do diabetes and bipolar co-occur?

This question has yet to be answered definitively. However, there are several theories, including the following:

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- The stress hormone cortisol tends to be elevated in both bipolar patients and diabetics. In particular, very high level levels of cortisol have been observed in people suffering from bipolar depression. Too much cortisol leads to insulin resistance so it is possible that the elevated cortisol in people with bipolar disorder leads to diabetes.
- People with bipolar disorder often self-medicate with food, including the "comfort foods" high in sugar and saturated fats that contribute to both metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes.

Summary of the bipolar/diabetes connection

Diabetes is a very serious health condition that is a leading cause of death and disability. People with bipolar disorder are more likely to develop diabetes than members of the general population. Further, certain medications used in treating bipolar disorder can induce diabetes. However, the same healthy diet and exercise program that can both prevent and treat type 2 diabetes is also highly effective in treating the symptoms of bipolar.

Discover [The Bipolar Diet](#) Today

We now know that people with bipolar disorder also face hugely increased risk of early death from diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Over 35% of people with bipolar disorder are obese, and people with bipolar disorder are up to two times more likely to die from heart disease, diabetes and stroke than are members of the general population. After starting medication to treat my bipolar disorder I gained over 40 lbs. The good news is that I got rid of all that unhealthy fat, and now you can too. There is a wealth of research proving that simple diet and lifestyle changes can improve both your mental AND physical health. "The Bipolar Diet" details everything I've learned about eating delicious, satisfying food that stabilizes my moods and controls my weight. Discover [The Bipolar Diet](#) today!