



**Bipolar Disorder  
Awareness Day**  
**October 5, 2006**

## **Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day Facts**

### **What is Bipolar Disorder?**

Bipolar disorder, or manic depression, is a serious brain disorder that causes extreme shifts in mood, energy, and functioning. It is characterized by episodes of mania and depression that can last from days to months and usually begins in late adolescence, but can begin in early childhood or as late as a person's 40s or 50s. Bipolar disorder is a chronic condition and generally requires life-long treatment.

Approximately 2.3 million Americans are presently diagnosed with bipolar disorder. While the majority of people with bipolar disorder experience an onset of symptoms before age 20, many suffer for nearly 10 years before an accurate diagnosis is made.

Bipolar disorder can be treated--people with this illness can lead full and productive lives. However, if left untreated, people with the disorder are at great risk for suicide, substance abuse, and other harmful consequences. The mortality rate for people with untreated bipolar disorder is higher than for most types of heart disease and many types of cancer. Approximately 25-50 percent of people with bipolar disorder attempt suicide at least once; this is one of the highest rates for any psychiatric disorder.

### **What is Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day?**

Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day was created by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and Abbott Laboratories to increase awareness of bipolar disorder, promote early detection and accurate diagnosis, reduce stigma, and minimize the devastating impact on the 2.3 million Americans presently affected by the disorder.

NAMI and Abbott Laboratories aim to encourage people to join the Bipolar Disorder Awareness effort by:

- Learning more about the symptoms of bipolar disorder and mental illness, and understanding its impact on society.
- Participating in a free mental health screening.
- Reaching out to individuals suffering from bipolar disorder or mental illness.
- Encouraging individuals with bipolar disorder to seek treatment.

### **Need more information on Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day?**

For more information on bipolar disorder or Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day, go to [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw).