

Breakthrough Symptoms and Bipolar Disorder



Breakthrough symptoms refer to symptoms that emerge during treatment. In bipolar disorder, this may signal a shift from one mood state to another. Often you may associate patient symptoms with:

- Lack of consistency in taking medications
- Use of drugs or alcohol
- Psycho-social stress
- New schedule changes, and
- Other external factors.

Explore with patients possible drivers for lack of medication consistency:

- Changes in the generic formulation
- Concerns about side effects
- Views about efficacy
- Views about the decline in medication effectiveness overtime, and
- Views about the adequacy of the prescribed treatment.

Example: To emerge from a manic or depressive phase often requires medication changes that include a dose adjustment.

To maximize treatment, watch closely for changes in:

- Mood
- Energy level
- Appetite, and
- Duration of sleep.