

Bipolar Mania

A handy chart to help you compare the medicines to help bipolar mania

You might also want to look at the pages for bipolar mood disorder, acute psychiatric emergency and insomnia

Please note: You are unique and this is only a guide!

This guide will be about right for most people, but not everyone. Some people may get better but some may stay the same. Some may improve quicker than other people. Some may get many side effects, others none at all. What happens to you will depend on your unique brain and your genes. However, this guide should help you to be able to choose between the many medicines. There are many other ways you can be helped but medicines are usually the first choice.

No guide can be 100% unbiased, but we have tried hard to stick to the facts about medicines. We hope you take this guide in the way in which it is intended i.e. an honest attempt to inform, educate and help.

What the sections in the table mean:

Medicine – these are the main medicines to help treat the symptoms of **bipolar mania**, and a few others that are sometimes used.

- These medicines are in no special order
- We have listed them as their “generic name” (the name of the actual medicine).
- This is only a short guide. Please see the rest of our website for more details
- Not all these medicines work as well as each other. Your clinician may be able to help you choose which one (or ones) might be best for you.
- Some of these medicines might not be used in your area

Usual dose per day – this will depend on how well you do and what side effects you get. People usually need to start on higher dose when very high. It is usually best to start a medicine slowly, but that isn’t always the best idea with someone who is very high.

How we think it might work – this is how we think the medicine works in the brain. There is more on this on our website. Taking two medicines with the same way of working doesn’t often help much. Dopamine and GABA are two of the brain’s chemical messengers. Dopamine has many effects but too much can lead to psychosis. GABA helps calm the brain.

How long it takes to work – this is just a guide as some people may get better quicker or slower. But don’t give up too early.

Some of the main side effects – these are just a few of the main side effects. Many are worse at higher doses, but most wear off after a few weeks.

- = Most people will get this side effect
- = Quite a few will get this side effect
- = Only a few people will get this side effect
- o = This is very rare or not known

The side effects here are:

Drowsiness – feeling sleepy, sedated or doped up

Muscle stiffness – can be stiffness or a slight shake or tremor

Weight gain – feeling more hungry and putting on weight

Dry mouth, blurred vision – plus constipation, poor memory, difficulty passing urine (sometimes called “anticholinergic side effects”)

Sexual problems – lack of desire or pleasure

There are many other possible side effects.

Please see our website for more details of each of the medicines and side effects.

How long you could or should take it for - how long you take any medicine for will be up to you. Taking a medicine means remembering every day and may be also getting some side effects. It also often means you get well and stay well. You will need to decide what helps you best and what helps you get on with your life.

How to stop it – some medicines can be stopped quickly. Others should be stopped slowly. It is best to try to stop all medicines slowly – it’s kinder to your brain.

Tips on how to get the best out of medication:

- Read our website to make sure you know what the medicine is for, when and how to take it and for how long to take it
- Try to get the best out of one medicine before trying another. Get the right dose for you, try taking it at different times, and try to cope with any side effects
- Take it regularly every day, unless it is meant to be taken only when required (*find ways to remember e.g. leave the pack by your bed, in the kitchen, next to your toothbrush, in your car if you have one, next to the TV or computer, but keep them out of the sight and reach of children*)
- Although medicines can help most people’s symptoms, they are not always the only answer. Please see the website for ideas for self-help, and help from others

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Medicine	Usual dose	How we think it might work (probably)	How long it takes to work	Some of the main side effects *					How long you could or should take it for	How to stop it
				Drowsi-ness	Muscle stiffness	Weight gain	Dry mouth, blurred vision	Sexual problems		
Valproate semisodium (eg. Depakote®)	Up to 2000mg a day	Boosts the effect of GABA, the brain's natural calming chemical messenger	Can be a couple of days at high dose	●●	0	●	0	0	Can be many years, as they can help stop you becoming ill again	Should be slowly over a few weeks. If you stop any quicker, it might make you less stable.
Risperidone	4-6mg a day	All reduce the effect of dopamine	Can have a quick effect in a few hours but the effect should build over a few days or week or so	●	●●	●●	●	●●		
Olanzapine	Up to 20mg a day			●●●	●	●●●	●	●		
Quetiapine (Seroquel XL®)	600mg a day			●●●	●	●●	●	●		
Aripiprazole (Abilify®)	15-30mg a day	Regulates dopamine receptors	Can take a few days	●	●	0	0	0		
Asenapine (Systrest®)	5-10mg twice a day	Reduces the effect of dopamine		●●●	●●	●	●	0		
Carbamazepine	Up to 1600 mg a day	Calms the spread of stimulating messages	Can take a few days	●●	0	●	0	0		
Lithium	Can be up to 1000mg a day or higher	We don't really know for sure as it does lots of things in the brain	Can take a week or two	●	●	●●	0	●		
Haloperidol	Up to 18mg a day by injection or 30mg by mouth	Reduces the effect of dopamine	Can have an effect in a few hours but the effect should build over a few days or weeks	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	As above, but not usually used long-term	
Other medicines (usually used with the main medicines for a while)										
Benzodiazepines	Lorazepam 4mg a day or higher	Boosts the effect of GABA, the brain's natural calming chemical messenger	Should be quick e.g. about an hour	●●●	0	0	0	0	Are usually used only for a few days or until you are stable	Slowly over a week or so