

3 Ways Cortisol Levels Affect People With Bipolar Disorder

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Researchers have found a link between high and low cortisol levels and bipolar disorder; read on:



[1]

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#1 The stress hormone

A 2014 study from Sweden discovered that elevated or low levels of cortisol ^[2]—the stress hormone—are associated with depression and lower quality of life in people with bipolar disorder. In fact, researchers found that in people with bipolar with either high or low cortisol levels, depression was twice as common compared to people with normal cortisol levels. As well, the survey found that low quality of life was six times more common with low cortisol levels and five times more common in those with high cortisol levels.

#2 Depression and poor quality of life

“In bipolar depression ^[3] the stress system is often activated, which means that the affected individuals have elevated cortisol levels in the blood,” noted Umeå University PhD student Martin Maripuu. We have now been able to show that both over- and underactivity in the stress system, with corresponding elevated or reduced cortisol levels, can impair mental health in terms of depression and poor quality of life in these patients.”

#3 Chronic stress

Researchers speculate that people with bipolar experience chronic stress ^[4], “which causes an exhaustion of the stress system, resulting in reduced cortisol levels.” Previous studies confirmed that stress triggers bipolar episodes in people, but then mania and depression further contribute to the overall stress load. Researchers are still gaining a better understanding of this link with cortisol and bipolar, but many suggest that effective treatment of the disorder “should involve regulating and researching the stress system and cortisol levels,” said Maripuu.

related: *Managing Stress While Also Managing Bipolar* ^[5]

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[1] Image: <http://www.bphope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/cortisol-bipolar-disorder.jpg>

[2] elevated or low levels of cortisol: <http://www.bphope.com/stress-of-negative-life-events-reflected-in-cortisol-levels-in-hair/>

[3] bipolar depression: <http://www.bphope.com/blog/bipolar-depression-and-having-to-escape/>

[4] chronic stress: <http://www.bphope.com/women-have-higher-rates-of-mental-distress-across-lifetime-than-men/>

[5] *Managing Stress While Also Managing Bipolar*: <http://www.bphope.com/bipolar-buzz/7-ways-to-manage-stress-while-also-managing-bipolar/>