

Mood Disorders Questionnaire

This is a test for bipolar disorder developed by a team of leading bipolar researchers.* The MDQ is widely known and used. You'll learn how to score this test when you're done, but remember, even a "positive" test result does not mean you have bipolar disorder. You'll see why when we come to scoring your results.

Here are the 3 sections. For section 1, write down the numbers 1-13 on a piece of paper and answer each question with a yes or no (or you can just print this page). Answer section 2 with a yes or no. Choose the answer in section 3 that best fits your situation and write it down.

1	Has there ever been a period of time when you were not your usual self (while not on drugs or alcohol) and -	Yes	No
	- you felt so good or so hyper that other people thought you were not your normal self or you were so hyper that you got into trouble?	Yes	No
	- you were so irritable that you shouted at people or started fights or arguments?	Yes	No
	- you felt much more self-confident than usual?	Yes	No
	- you got much less sleep than usual and found you didn't really miss it? *	Yes	No
	- you were much more talkative or spoke faster than usual?	Yes	No
	- thoughts raced through your head or you couldn't slow your mind down?	Yes	No
	- you were so easily distracted by things around you that you had trouble concentrating or staying on track?	Yes	No
	- you had much more energy than usual?	Yes	No
	- you were much more active or did many more things than usual?	Yes	No
	- you were much more social or outgoing than usual? For example, you telephoned friends in the middle of the night.	Yes	No
	- you were much more interested in sex than usual?	Yes	No
	- you did things that were unusual for you or that other people might have thought were excessive, foolish, or risky?	Yes	No
- spending money got you or your family into trouble?	Yes	No	
2	If you checked YES to more than one of the above, have several of these ever happened during the <i>same period of time</i> ?	Yes	No
3	How much of a <i>problem</i> did any of these cause you -- like being unable to work; having family, money, or legal troubles; or getting into arguments or fights?		
	No Problem Minor Problem Moderate Problem Serious Problem		

Scoring the Mood Disorders Questionnaire

The following scores are the most indicative of having bipolar disorder, though be careful: a positive test *does not mean you have bipolar disorder* (read on to understand that). The authors found these scores include the most individuals who do have bipolar disorder, and "rule out" the most individuals who don't have it.

Section 1	7 yes responses
Section 2	Yes
Section 3	Yes/ must cause some problems in life

Don't go away yet, though. How do you know whether the test was "right"? All tests like this have a built-in rate of being wrong. If you'll stick with me, I think I can help you understand more about this.

Think about it: they had to have a way of saying who *definitely* "has" bipolar disorder, as a way of "testing the test". If the test says yes, but their "gold standard", their definite authority -- whatever that was -- says no, then that means the test is not working perfectly. They tried using 6 yes's, and 8 yes's. But the test-performed best, compared to their experts' gold standard, when 7 was used as the official "cut-off".

You need to know this. When somebody offers you a "test", which says whether you have some diagnosis or not, this is how it is done. The test is compared to some "gold standard" way of knowing.

You see the problem? In bipolar disorder, we have no gold standard way of knowing! There is no "lab test" that measures some chemical only bipolar people have. (Hopefully in the next 5 years or so we'll have something like that). The "gold standard" used in testing the test you just took was some experts using a list of diagnostic criteria, and talking with the patient for an hour. Not a really great standard, but the best we now have.

What's the point of all this? You just took a test, and the scoring system says: seven items = "yes", and less than that = "no". Just be careful and understand: the test you took is not magic. Even using "7 yes's" as the cut-off, one person in 10 will be missed that their *gold standard* thought "had bipolar disorder". Similarly, getting 7 yes answers doesn't prove you have bipolar disorder, because there can be "false positives" too, with this or any such test (how many false positives? that gets pretty complicated. When you put all this together, I hope you can see that taking a test like this doesn't offer "the answer". It is a shorthand version of deciding something that would otherwise take you hours to learn about.

Hirschfeld RM et al. (2000) Am J Psychiatry 157 (11):1873-5