There’s no single cause of bipolar disorder, but there are several factors that increase the likelihood that someone will develop the illness.

**Genetics + Biology + Environment**

**Genetic Vulnerabilities:** Bipolar disorder runs in families. Relatives of a person with bipolar disorder are at an increased risk of developing either bipolar disorder or depression.

**Individual Biology:** Chemical imbalances in the brain can contribute to the development of bipolar disorder.

**Environmental Factors:** Poverty, stress, and other hardships can act as a trigger and increase an individual’s risk of developing bipolar disorder.

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 **Risk Factors vs. Protective Factors**

**Risk Factors:** Anything that increases the likelihood of developing or worsening bipolar disorder.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| failing to use medication as prescribed | drug or alcohol abuse | lack of social support |
| poor coping skills | frequent stress | poor health (inadequate exercise and nutrition) |

**Protective Factors:** Anything that reduces the likelihood of developing bipolar disorder, or anything that prevents the disorder from worsening.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| compliance with medication | healthy lifestyle | effective coping skills |
| social support | use of treatment resources such as psychotherapy | structured schedule |