Borderline personality disorder in one page

What it is

What is BPD?

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a condition where emotions hit hard and change fast, making relationships and your sense of self unstable. About 1 in 100 adults live with it. It usually starts in the teens or early adulthood, and it can be treated.

- BPD makes emotions intense and quick to change
- About 1 in 100 adults live with BPD
- BPD usually starts in the teens or early adulthood

The signs

What are the symptoms of BPD?

The main symptoms of BPD are emotions that swing hard and fast, fear of being left, stormy relationships, an unsteady sense of self, acting on impulse, emptiness, anger, and thoughts of self-harm or suicide. A diagnosis needs 5 of 9 long-running signs.

- BPD signs are patterns that last for years
- Emotions with BPD swing hard and fast
- Fear of being left is a core sign of BPD

Treatment

Which BPD therapies should I ask for?

Ask for a structured therapy designed for BPD, and say its name. Project Air names DBT, mentalisation-based therapy and others. A 2020 review found no evidence of a difference between types.

Who diagnoses and who prescribes

Who can diagnose BPD, and do they have to tell me?

Your GP or a psychiatrist can diagnose it, and you should be told. The 2012 national guideline, now rescinded, said so. That is guidance, not law. Ask directly.

- A psychiatrist can also diagnose BPD, on GP referral.

What it costs

What free or low-cost BPD help is there?

Some, and it differs by state. A few states run public BPD programs, Medicare Mental Health Centres are free with no referral, and Medicare pays $37.85 back on a clinical psychologist's group session. Checked 30 September 2026.

Some of this differs by state and territory. See the pages on your state at haihealth.au/blog/bpd-personality.

Read next

- How do I get help for BPD? →
- Do I need a psychiatrist for BPD? →
- Is it true nothing can be done for BPD? →
- Where can I get free BPD treatment? →
- Will BPD on a form be held against me? →
- What support is there for family and partners? →
- The BPD quiz →

Find these at haihealth.au/blog/bpd-personality

In danger? Call 000. Lifeline 13 11 14, text 0477 13 11 14, or chat online.

Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467. Free counselling by phone or video, any hour.

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