Borderline Personality Disorder

This handout will help you learn about borderline personality disorder (BPD) and treatment options. If you have questions about this guide, talk with your providers.

Borderline Personality Disorder
People with BPD often have problems with mood, self-image, and relationships. Common signs and symptoms are:

- Unstable, intense relationships
- Fear of abandonment, separation or loss
- A dislike of being alone; needing to have other people around
- Problems with self-image
- Acting on impulse (spending money, unsafe sex, reckless driving)
- Self-harm such as cutting, suicide attempts
- Rapid mood changes
- Feelings of emptiness
- Feeling wary or being out-of-touch with reality when stressed
- Intense anger or difficulty managing anger

Causes
The cause is unknown. Many theories attempt to explain this illness. These theories focus on:

- Family relationships
- Childhood abuse
- Biological factors
- Mental health problems in the family

Treatment
The choice of treatment depends on many factors. These factors include:

- Your history
- Your current needs and interests
- The treatment options where you live

Treatment options include:

- Dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT)
- One-on-one counseling
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Medicine
- Keeping crisis plans up to date

It may be helpful for everyone on your health care team to have a copy of the crisis plan.

Resources
If you are in crisis or need help right away, help is available. Call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 10/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4291.