

## HEALTH MANAGEMENT FACT SHEET

# Emotionally unstable personality disorder

**Emotionally unstable personality disorder (EUPD) is a psychiatric condition which can cause fluctuations in mood, and which affects how an individual interacts with and relates to others.**

Formerly known as borderline personality disorder (BPD), EUPD is part of a group of psychiatric conditions known as personality disorders – where someone’s personality can interfere with their function, perceptions, behaviour and relationships with others.

EUPD commonly presents in adolescence/early childhood and is often experienced along with other mental health conditions.

### Key takeaways

- > EUPD affects just under 1% of the population\*
- > It is common for EUPD to co-exist with other psychological health conditions, e.g. depression, anxiety or eating disorders — which may also require treatment
- > The cause usually includes both genetic and environmental factors, with a history of childhood trauma being common in individuals with EUPD
- > Symptoms vary, but typically include intense and fluctuating emotions and moods, instability in relationships, recurrent thoughts regarding self-harm and/or suicide and using self-harm as a way of managing emotional distress
- > Treatment is primarily psychological therapy, aimed at optimising an individual’s function — dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) is commonly used

# Symptoms

Symptoms, difficulties and experiences can vary between individuals diagnosed with EUPD. The diagnosis is usually made by a psychiatrist, but individuals struggling with these symptoms may be managed by their GP in the first instance.

## Symptoms can include:

- > Intense and fluctuating emotions, with mood changes from hour-to-hour or day-to-day
- > Difficulty in maintaining stable relationships
- > Impulsivity in behaviour and behaviours which may cause risk of harm, such as using alcohol or drugs
- > Persistent feelings of emptiness
- > Recurrent suicidal thoughts and/or using self-harm as a way of managing emotional distress
- > Disturbances in thought processes or perception
- > Fear and avoidance of abandonment
- > Not having a strong sense of identity

# Treatment and recovery

Psychological therapy is the main treatment for EUPD, aiming to improve an individual's function, interactions and relationships. Patients are likely to require prolonged treatment, which may be on a group or individual basis.

Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) is commonly used. While medication may be used to address co-existing conditions, it is not generally advised for the treatment of EUPD\*.

Depending on the severity of symptoms, some individuals may require support from a psychiatrist or mental health team, while others may be managed by their GP.

Lifestyle factors to promote good mental wellbeing are also recommended. These include keeping a good routine, healthy eating, regular exercise and limiting alcohol consumption within recommended limits (14 units per week).

Self-help techniques such as mindfulness, meditation or breathing exercises may also be helpful in managing symptoms of EUPD.

Prognosis can vary between individuals. While symptoms and function can often improve with treatment and as people move into older adulthood, some continue to experience significant and persistent symptoms.

\* [Nice guidance 2009 Borderline personality disorder: recognition and management](#)

## Contact us to find out more



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## Useful resources

[NHS: Borderline personality disorder](#)

[Mind's Side by Side supportive online community](#)

[Mind: BPD - How can other people help?](#)