

Benefits of treatment for your child's depression

Real depression does not usually go away without treatment, and people who have been depressed tend to become more easily and severely depressed in the future. There is a great advantage to noticing the symptoms of depression early and providing immediate treatment. Getting help for your child or teenager is proven to help with healthy adjustment later in life.

Treatment options

Treatment for your child and family may include:

- increasing your child's coping skills
- addressing underlying problems with school, peers, losses, etc.
- learning ways to create resiliency & strength in your child and family
- restoring your child's sense of well-being and enthusiasm toward the future
- educating parents about parenting a depressed child (such as more effective communication and disciplining methods)
- safeguarding your child against the potential risks of future episodes of depression

Where to seek help

You don't have to manage your child's depression on your own. There are some good books and web sites that can give more information about depression. But often, professional help is necessary. Professionals that work with you and your depressed child or teenager should know a lot about depression and childhood and teenage development. He or she should use research-proven treatment techniques and be willing to talk with your child's doctors and/or teachers to improve the benefits of treatment. Medication may help treat severe cases of depression and usually works best in combination with counseling. Talk with your doctor about the possibilities of medication for your child or teenager.

Depression

In Children & Adolescents



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Depression in children and adolescents

One out of 20 children and 1 out of 10 adolescents experience significant depression.¹ Childhood and adolescent depression often goes unnoticed, but meanwhile, it can have a devastating impact on how children and adolescents feel and behave at home, school, and with their friends and family. Some of the main symptoms of depression are:

- feeling worthless
- appetite disturbance
- sleep disturbance
- lack of motivation
- suicidal thoughts

Children and teenagers with depression show problems with:

Thoughts

difficulty concentrating, indecisiveness, thoughts of death, thoughts of being worthless

Feelings

guilt, irritability, no emotional expression, sad mood

Behaviors

reduced interest in activities, agitation, laziness, aggression

Physical Changes

sleeping too much or too little, decreased or increased appetite, lack of energy

Depression...

...comes and goes in cycles, and each person will feel or show their depression in unique ways. Usually, he or she will be more likely to also show symptoms of anxiety, aggression, substance use (usually in teenagers), and conduct problems, which only increase the risks of more severe depression, poor social skills, substance abuse, and suicide. In many instances, childhood and adolescent depression negatively affects the whole family.

Causes of depression in children and adolescents

Some common causes are:

loss, major changes, social stress, learning problems, family conflict, abuse, heredity (a child who has family members with depression may also become depressed when a stressful event occurs).

1 Miller, J.A. (1998) The childhood depression sourcebook. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC/Contemporary.

2 Fassler, D.G. & Dumas, L.S. (1997). Help me, I'm sad: recognizing, treating, and preventing childhood and adolescent depression. New York: Penguin Books.

When to seek help

Some sadness is normal, healthy, and temporary, and is usually in response to a stressful event or transition. If symptoms persist over time, or if the changes are having a real impact on social, academic, and family life, seek help.

SUICIDE & DEPRESSION

An important note about Suicide: Depression and suicide are highly related. About 30-50% of depressed adolescents seriously consider suicide, which is currently the 2nd leading cause of death in 15-19 year olds.² Take suicide threats very seriously, and be aware of the kinds of events that might lead to suicide plans: severe arguments with loved ones, breakup of a relationship, peer problems, loss of a loved one, public humiliation, problems with teachers, and significant family changes. Never underestimate suicide threats—get help right away.