

Depression: Facts for Families

Resources

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
www.aacap.org
- National Institute of Mental Health – Click on Depression in the Health Topics then select Learn More and click Teen Depression
www.nimh.nih.gov
- Society of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology – Online Education for Parents
effectivechildtherapy.fiu.edu/parents

What are the symptoms of depression?

Your child or teen may have some or all of these signs and symptoms of depression:

- Sadness or feeling irritable
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Eating too much or too little
- Weight changes
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Feeling tired a lot
- Feeling guilty
- Trouble thinking or paying attention
- Suicidal thoughts or behavior

Other symptoms may include hopelessness, anxiety, aches and pains and oppositional behavior (uncooperative and hostile).

How common is depression?

Depression is a problem faced by many children and teens. At any given point in time, about 1 to 8% of children and teens are struggling with depression. By the age of 18, 1 in 5 youth have had a depressive episode and over half have had some depressive symptoms. During childhood, about the same amount of boys and girls have depression. Between the ages of 13 and 15, slightly more girls than boys are depressed. By middle to late adolescence, girls are twice as likely to be depressed.

What causes depression?

Children and teens become depressed for many reasons. There isn't one single cause but stress plays a key role in the start of depression. Stress can also cause your child's symptoms to continue. Stress comes in all shapes and sizes and might include:

- School pressures
- Problems with peers
- Family conflict
- Pressures of adolescence (moving from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school, romantic relationships, etc.)

To Learn More

- Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine: Support and Crisis Services 206-987-2164, option 4
- Adolescent Medicine 206-987-2028
- Your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

What is the impact of depression?

Depression can cause:

- Academic and social impairment
- An increased risk of suicide and substance use
- Family problems
- Repeated episodes of depression

Due to the long-term consequences of depression, it should be taken seriously and treated.

How is depression treated?

There are three main types of treatment for depressed youth:

- "Talk Therapy" or Psychotherapy – this includes Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy and Behavioral Activation Therapy
- Medicine – Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are common medicines used to treat depression in youth. Other medicines can also be useful.
- Combined Treatment – using talk therapy plus medicine

Studies show that both "talk therapy" and medicine are useful for about 60% of youth. Combined treatment, using talk therapy plus medicine, shows the best results. Combined treatment has been successful for about 70% of youth. It is important to talk with your child's provider about the pros and cons of each type of treatment.

Is treatment helpful?

Treatment for depression takes time to work, but it can shorten the length of your child's depressive episode. A typical depressive episode in youth may last for up to 9 months or an entire academic school year. Depression can impact the major growth and development that takes place in that time. Also, depression can cause problems with academic, social and family functioning. So, using treatment to shorten the length of the depressive episode is important.