

Depression: Facts for Families

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 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 number 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. There are many types of stress, including:

- 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.)
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To Learn More

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

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your 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.

Resources

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

aacap.org

National Institute of Mental Health

Click on Depression in the Health Topics then select Learn More and click Teen Depression

nimh.nih.gov

Society of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology

Online Education for Parents

effectivechildtherapy.fiu.edu/parents
