

Depression in Children & Adolescents

Occasional feelings of sadness or unhappiness are a normal part of growing up. However, if children or adolescents are sad, irritable, or no longer enjoy everyday activities for a long period of time, it may be a sign that they are suffering from depression.



Signs & Symptoms

Although there are many similar signs and symptoms, depression may look different in children and adolescents. Children may have more physical complaints such as stomach aches, whereas adolescents may turn to drugs or alcohol to make them feel better. A child or adolescent with depression might experience:

- Changes in appetite or weight loss
- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, irritability, or tearfulness
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Withdrawal or unhappiness from everyday activities
- Feeling tired or loss of energy
- Worrying more or having trouble concentrating

Causes & Risk Factors

Depression can develop from a variety of factors such as genetics, anxiety, trauma, or behavioral issues. Various risk factors can also increase a child's or adolescent's chance of developing depression. Risk factors may include bullying, abuse, spending an excessive amount of time on social media, moving to a new place, changing schools, having a loved one experience a serious illness, or having a family member, friend, or pet die.

Diagnosis & Treatment

A pediatrician or other mental health professional can complete a comprehensive assessment to diagnose the individual with depression. Professionals may recommend psychotherapy, family therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, or medications to help the individual effectively overcome their depression. If you or a loved one is suffering from depression, call us at 1.800.928.8000. We can help.

Source – American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry: https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth