



Depression

What is Depression?

Occasionally being sad or feeling hopeless is a part of every child's life. However, some children feel sad or uninterested in things that they used to enjoy, or feel helpless or hopeless in situations they are able to change. When children feel persistent sadness and hopelessness, they may be diagnosed with depression.

Some children may not talk about their helpless and hopeless thoughts, and may not appear sad. Depression might also cause a child to make trouble or act unmotivated, causing others not to notice that the child is depressed, or to incorrectly label the child as a trouble-maker or lazy.



What are some of the signs of Depression?



- Feeling sad, hopeless, or irritable a lot of the time
- Not wanting to do, or enjoy doing, fun things
- Showing changes in eating patterns – eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
- Showing changes in sleep patterns – sleeping a lot more or a lot less than normal
- Showing changes in energy – being tired and sluggish or tense and restless a lot of the time
- Having a hard time paying attention
- Feeling worthless, useless, or guilty
- Showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior

Extreme depression can lead a child to think about suicide or plan for suicide. For youth ages 10-24 years, suicide is among the leading causes of death.

What can parents do if they think their child may have Depression?

The first step to treatment is to talk with a healthcare provider, such as a primary care provider or a mental health specialist, about getting an evaluation. A mental health professional can develop a therapy plan that works best for the child and family. For very young children, involving parents in treatment is key; the school can also be included in the treatment plan. Consultation with a healthcare provider can help determine if medication should be part of the treatment.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020, *Anxiety & Depression in Children*
National Institute of Mental Health, 2018