



Children with symptoms of depression show behaviors that cause distress for the child, problems in social relationships and difficulties in school. The symptoms may include intense sadness, being irritable or grouchy, losing interest in daily activities that they used to enjoy, losing interest in friends, complaints about feeling ill (especially stomach and headaches) and doing poorly in school. Teenagers are sad sometimes, but when it lasts for two weeks and interferes with their functioning, parents should be concerned.

## How it affects my child

**When compared to their same-age peers, children who display symptoms of depression are more likely to:**

- Have lower levels of academic performance
- Are more likely to attempt suicide
- Are more likely to have unprotected sex
- Are more likely to abuse substances

**If one or more of these signs of depression persist, parents should seek help**

- Frequent sadness, tearfulness, crying
- Decreased interest in activities; or inability to enjoy previously favorite activities
- Hopelessness
- Persistent boredom; low energy
- Social isolation, poor communication • Low self-esteem and guilt
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Increased irritability, anger or hostility • Difficulty with relationships
- Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school
- Poor concentration
- A major change in eating and/or sleeping patterns
- Talk of, or efforts to run away from home
- Thoughts or expressions of suicide or self destructive behavior

## What can we do about it?

Actively observe your child's behavior around the house. Consider how and where your children spend their time—in their room alone, outside with peers, in front of the television.

Think about the factors at home that may contribute to the child's symptoms of depression. Write these down on a piece of paper and bring them with you when meeting with a mental health professional, school staff or pediatrician.

Learn how to identify “cries for help” from children and adolescents with depression. Know when your child needs immediate attention from you or a specialist.

Ask school or community mental health professionals about local resources. Attempt to enroll your child in a recreational league or youth organization that utilizes their interests, strengths and talents.

Seek a specialist’s opinion of psychiatric treatments for depression or to learn more about different types of medicine prescribed for depression. Depression is often treated effectively with a combination of therapy and anti-depressants.

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## Resource Links

### **Children’s Mental Health Matters!**

Facts for Families — First Steps in Seeking Help  
[www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org)

### **American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry**

This site contains resources for families to promote an understanding of mental illnesses.  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

#### *The Depressed Child*

(which was a reference for this fact sheet)  
[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/The-Depressed-Child-004.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/The-Depressed-Child-004.aspx)

#### *Grief and Children*

[https://www.aacap.org/aacap/families\\_and\\_youth/facts\\_for\\_families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Grief-008.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/aacap/families_and_youth/facts_for_families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Grief-008.aspx)

### **National Institute of Mental Health**

NIMH strives to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illness through basic clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure. Visit NIMH for information on clinical trial and mental health information, statistics, and resources.  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

#### *Depression in Children & Adolescents*

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/depression-in-children-and-adolescents.shtml>



Coordinated by



The Children’s Mental Health Matters! Campaign is a collaboration of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) and the Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) with support from the Maryland Department of Health - Behavioral Health Administration. The Campaign goal, with School and Community Champions across the state, is to raise public awareness of the importance of children’s mental health. For more information, please visit [www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org)