

DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



Every child or adolescent gets sad from time to time. It's a part of growing up. But when they have symptoms like sadness or irritability most days for at least two weeks, they could have depression.

Depression is a common mood issue where someone has ongoing sadness or irritability.



It may or may not have a specific cause. Sometimes, stress or a major life event (like the loss of a loved one) may cause depression. But it's possible to have depression without a known cause.

What are the signs of depression in children and adolescents?

- Appearing sad or irritable
- Behavioral changes (not enjoying things they like, giving things away)
- Changes in appetite (eating more or less than usual)
- A hard time concentrating (focusing)
- Drug or alcohol use
- Saying that they feel worthless or empty
- Isolation or keeping to themselves more (not as social)
- No longer enjoying activities they once enjoyed
- Doing worse in school (lower grades, a hard time with tests or completing homework)
- Sleep changes (sleeping a lot more or not able to sleep)
- Thoughts about death, dying, or hurting themselves

What are physical symptoms children and adolescents can have with depression?

- Headaches or pain
- Fatigue (feeling very tired) or low energy
- Moving more slowly than usual
- Sudden weight gain or weight loss
- Upset stomach





TIPS FOR PARENTS

How do I support children and adolescents with depression?

Check-in with your child. Ask your child how they're feeling. Use caring words like, "I noticed you seem down lately. Would you like to talk about it?" This shows them you're ready to listen and can help them feel supported.

Get professional help. Depression might not go away on its own, and it could even get worse. A doctor can check to see if your child has depression and can come up with the right treatment plan. This might include talking to someone (therapy) or taking medicine.

Stick to the plan. Sometimes, it takes time for the treatment to work. Make sure your child takes their medicine or goes to therapy like the doctor says.

Be patient and kind. Depression can be hard to deal with. Your child might feel sad for reasons they don't understand. Let them know it's okay to feel this way and that you're there to help them through it.

Encourage healthy habits. Eating well, moving around, and doing fun things can help your child feel better. Try to limit how much time they spend on screens or social media because these can make them feel worse.

Support social time. Being alone too much can make depression worse. Help your child spend time with friends or family who care about them.

What are the warning signs and resources to prevent suicide?

It's scary to think about someone hurting themselves, but it's important to know the signs. Sometimes, depression can make people think about suicide.

Warning Signs:

- Talking about wanting to die or not wanting to live anymore
- Feeling hopeless or like life has no meaning
- Thinking they're a problem for their family
- Saying they can't handle the pain anymore
- Saying goodbye to people or giving away their things

What to do:

If something seems off, trust your gut. Don't wait for your child to ask for help.

If your child talks about hurting themselves, remove things that can hurt them. This can be things like medicines, sharp objects, or weapons. Get help right away. Call 911 or take them to the hospital emergency room. They may need help from doctors and counselors who know how to help.





What are some suicide prevention resources?

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

A trained crisis counselor will give support and resources to help you and your child. Call or Text 988. You can also chat online at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).

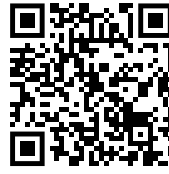
California Youth Crisis Line

Families and youth ages 12 to 24 can talk with trained staff and volunteer counselors. Call or text (800) 843-5200 (24 hours a day, seven days a week).

Trevor Project

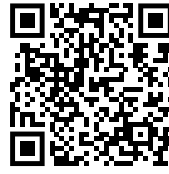
LGBTQ youth can connect with crisis counselors (24 hours a day, seven days a week). All communication is private. Call (866) 488-7386, text 678678 or chat online at [thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org).

Where can I find online resources for more support?



[Depression in Children and Teens – English](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics



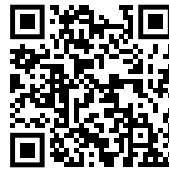
[Depression in Children and Teens – Spanish](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics



[Depression in Children and Teens – English](#)

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry



[Is my Child Depressed? – English](#)

Anxiety and Depression Association of America



[Suicide Prevention – English](#)

Youth.gov



[Depression Treatments for Children and Adolescents – English](#)

American Psychological Association