

Childhood Depression

info for caregivers

Depression is a mental illness that affects people of all ages. Despite sharing the same symptoms as adults, depression in children often goes unnoticed and untreated. Children who are depressed may be misunderstood as being shy, difficult, or misbehaved.

⚠ Signs of Depression in Children

- ✓ **Sad or irritable most of the time.**
clingy, aggressive, cries often, difficult to console
- ✓ **Loss of interest in friends and activities.**
uninterested in socializing, playing, and other activities
- ✓ **School difficulties.**
poor concentration, behavioral issues, social withdrawal, falling grades
- ✓ **Sleep and eating problems.**
difficulty falling asleep, wanting to sleep all the time, fatigue, changes in appetite
- ✓ **Negative thinking.**
low self-esteem, excessive guilt, worrying, thoughts of being tired of life or not wanting to live

📖 Treatment

Therapy	Caregiver Support	Medication
Play therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and family therapy may be used to help children manage depression. Children learn coping and communication skills and emotion management.	Caregivers support children's treatment by taking them to therapy, working with the therapist, and implementing treatment recommendations at home. The earlier treatment starts, the better the outcome.	In some cases of severe depression, medication is prescribed alongside therapy. Medication may be prescribed by a physician, psychiatrist, or other provider.

📄 Additional Info

- Depression in children often co-occurs with anxiety, ADHD, and behavior disorders. Sometimes, these other problems take center stage and prevent depression from being recognized and treated.
- Children with a family history of depression are more likely to develop depression themselves.
- Stressful or traumatic events—like bullying, parental conflict, divorce, moving, a death in the family, or the birth of a sibling—may trigger depression. However, it can also develop without such an event.