



Children's Health

Depression

WARNING SIGNS AND WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD OVERCOME IT

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

- feelings of sadness, anxiety or hopelessness
- lack of interest or pleasure in usual activities or pastimes
- a sudden increase or decrease in appetite
- insomnia or excessive sleepiness
- talk of suicide or death
- low energy
- restlessness
- irritability
- feelings of worthlessness
- changes in school performance (lowered grades, cutting classes or dropping out of activities)
- giving away prized possessions

THE NEED FOR ATTENTION

Children will often have the mistaken feeling that they're alone and unloved. If you suspect that your child is suffering from depression, extra attention may help him feel less alone and enable him to put his feelings into a more accurate perspective.

PINPOINT THE CAUSE

BIOLOGICAL: Researchers believe that some depression is caused by a biochemical disturbance in the brain that affects behavior, thoughts and feelings. This type of depression can be genetic.

MEDICATIONS: Over-the-counter and prescription medications can cause depression as a side effect. Check with your child's doctor or pharmacist. Changing prescriptions may be necessary.

GRIEF: Loss of a loved one or a major life change, such as a divorce, remarriage, relocating or changing schools, may be expressed physically or emotionally. Allow time for grieving, and encourage your children to talk about their feelings and express their emotions. Avoid telling your children to "snap out of it."

SEASONAL CHANGES: During wintertime when there's a lack of sunlight and most of the day is spent indoors, depression can occur. When the sun is out, spend some time outdoors with your child.

BEYOND HOME TREATMENT

Many children, like adults, need extra help coping with depression. If your child has signs of depression for more than a few weeks, check with your child's doctor. Psychotherapy may be a necessary alternative.

ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION

The suicide rate for teens and young adults has tripled over the past couple of decades. If a teenager threatens suicide, take him or her seriously. It's a rare teenager who is cheerful most of the time. Mood swings and bouts of excessive sleep are a normal part of growth. Beyond the norm, be alert to the warning signs of depression. If left untreated, depression may last months or longer and too often leads to suicide. Depression in adolescents can be successfully treated with psychotherapy or a combination of medication and psychotherapy.

