

Facts Parents Should Know About Children and Depression

What is Depression?

Depression is marked by sadness. It causes inactivity. Clear thinking is difficult and it's hard to concentrate. Some depression is normal. We call it sadness or grieving. But, lasting sadness and grief is not normal. When it becomes dejection and hopelessness, it can be the serious disorder we call depression.

What Can YOU Do About Depression?

- Take your concern seriously. If you think your child may be suffering from depression, trust your feelings. If you think something is wrong with your child, you're probably right.
- Get help if you think your child suffers from depression. Depression is not just a "phase" children go through. Children with depression need help. Start by talking to your school counselor or your doctor—today.
 - Be aware of the symptoms of depression. They include:
 - School difficulties, poor grades and not getting along with teachers or peers
 - Restlessness, grouchiness, sulkiness, aggression
 - Hiding out in one's room
 - Withdrawal from activities the child formerly enjoyed
 - Sleeplessness or sleeping more than normal
 - Weight gain or loss
 - Unwillingness to cooperate in family projects
 - Extreme or sudden mood changes
 - Abuse of alcohol or other drugs

What Can Parents Do to Prevent Suicide?

- Talk with your children about the subject. Let your child know that you care and you want to help.

- Take any suicide threat seriously. If your child talks about suicide make sure he sees a doctor or a counselor—IMMEDIATELY.
- Limit access to anything that could be used as a weapon. Guns are now used in a growing number of youth suicides.
- Help children take part in activities that help build their self-esteem.

Suicide Signs and Signals

- Deep sadness, lack of energy, loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities, difficulty in concentrating
- Failure in school, often accompanied by disinterest or feelings of helplessness
- Social isolation, a lack of close friends—even though there may be some contact with a group of peers
- Discord or disruption in the family—divorce, separation, alcoholism and physical or sexual abuse
- Recent death or suicide attempt by a loved one or family member
- Breakup with a serious boyfriend or girlfriend
- Atypical sleep and eating patterns
- Talking about feeling like a failure or talking about suicide. Comments such as “The only way out is for me to die.”
- Collecting pills, razor blades, knives, ropes or guns
- Giving away personal possessions. Writing a suicide note.
- Previous suicide attempt