

Adolescent Depression Signs and Symptoms

What is depression?

Feeling sad, down, or discouraged are natural emotions that happen when difficulties or troubles occur in our lives. Depression is different from typical sadness, because it lasts longer and feels stronger. Sometimes it is a feeling of emptiness, or being irritable and easily angered. It causes significant changes in your day-to-day activities and can even increase the risk of suicide. It is important to know that depression is no different from any physical illness. The medical community recognizes it as a disease — one that can affect your physical health and overall quality of life.

Depression can look like:

- Changes in sleeping, eating, or hygiene
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Avoiding and withdrawing from friends or family
- Changes in academic performance or problems at school
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, or like a burden to others
- Trouble concentrating, lacking focus, or getting headaches
- Lack of energy/motivation or feeling fatigued
- Tearfulness, anger, irritability, negative self-talk
- Self-injury (cutting, scratching, and/or burning the skin)
- Thoughts of death or suicide



How does depression affect someone?

Depression affects more than just mood. It drains the energy, motivation, and concentration a person needs for living well. It interferes with the ability to notice or enjoy the good things in life. Depression can also influence how we interact at school, in the home, and with friends. Depression can make a person see things much more negatively than they really are.

Depression can lead to:

- Discouragement
- Isolation
- Despair
- Hopelessness
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors



How is depression treated?

Depression can get better with the right treatment and attention over time. Interventions might include talk therapy, medication, or a combination of both. It usually takes a few weeks for these to start working, so it is important to stick with your treatment plan in order to have the best outcomes. Many people also find that it helps to open up to parents or other adults who they trust. Simply saying something like “I’ve been feeling really down lately and I think I’m depressed” can be a good way to start the conversation.

For other ideas on how to start these tough conversations, use our [Mental Health Conversation Checklist](#).

If you are a child or teenager and you think you might be depressed, ask your parent to schedule an appointment with your primary care doctor or a therapist. If a parent or family member can’t help, turn to your school counselor, school nurse, or other trusted adult. **You can also call our 24/7 Kids & Teens Helpline at 904.202.7900 or text LIFE to 741741.** If there is an immediate safety concern, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

