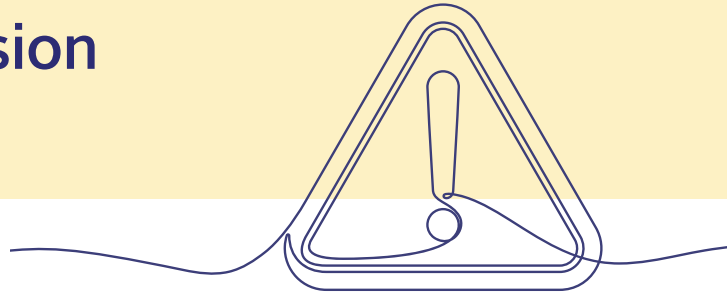


Recognizing signs of depression in children and adolescents

Children and teens don't always say, "I'm depressed."

Depression can look like changes in behavior, relationships, school, sleep or physical health. Look for **changes from your child's usual behavior**, especially when they last for **two or more weeks** or begin interfering with daily life.



Signs & symptoms to pay attention to

Mood & emotions

- Frequent sadness, tearfulness or appearing down
- Increased irritability, anger or frustration
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Increased sensitivity or emotional reactions
- Seeming emotionally numb or "shut down"

School & daily life

- Drop in grades or difficulty concentrating
- Trouble completing schoolwork or everyday responsibilities
- Missing school or avoiding activities
- Difficulty keeping up with normal routines

Interest & behavior

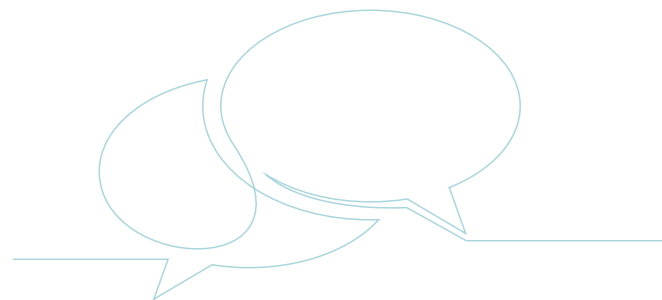
- Losing interest in friends, hobbies, sports or activities they usually enjoy
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- Spending significantly more time alone
- Less motivation or difficulty getting things done
- Noticeable changes in behavior or personality

Physical changes

- Significant changes in sleep
- Significant changes in appetite or eating patterns
- Low energy or frequent fatigue
- Frequent headaches, stomachaches or other physical complaints without a clear explanation

5 questions to ask your child

Choose a calm moment when you can listen without rushing to solve the problem. Use the following questions as a guide, but be sure to say them in a way that is natural and authentic for you.



- 1 "I've noticed you've seemed different lately. How have you been feeling emotionally?"
- 2 "What has been feeling hardest for you lately?"
- 3 "Are there things you've stopped enjoying or doing that you usually like to do? Which things?"
- 4 "What do you wish I understood about what you've been experiencing?"
- 5 "What would help you feel supported right now?"

A gentle but important question

If a child seems significantly depressed or is expressing hopelessness, parents should also ask directly about safety rather than avoiding the subject.

Asking directly does not put the idea into a child's head. If they say yes, take it seriously, stay with them and seek immediate help from a mental-health professional or emergency/crisis service.

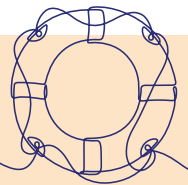
"When things feel really overwhelming, have you ever felt like you didn't want to be here, had suicidal thoughts or wanted to hurt yourself?"

If your child tells you they are having suicidal thoughts

Hearing that your child is having suicidal thoughts can be frightening. Your priority should be **safety, connection and getting help**.

- 1. Stay calm and listen.** Thank your child for telling you. Avoid judgment, panic, lectures or trying to immediately "fix" the situation.
- 2. Ask directly about their safety.** Ask whether they are thinking about suicide right now and whether they have a plan. You do not need to avoid the word suicide. Asking directly can help you understand how urgent the situation is.
- 3. Stay with your child if you are concerned about immediate safety.** Do not leave them alone while you arrange for help. In an immediate crisis, have another trusted adult help with other responsibilities if possible.
- 4. Get professional help promptly.** Contact your child's therapist, pediatrician or mental-health provider and explain exactly what your child reported. If they don't have a provider, contact a crisis service or health care professional for guidance.
- 5. If your child cannot stay safe or you believe there is an immediate danger, seek emergency help.** Call **911** or go to the nearest emergency department. Stay with your child until they are safely connected with appropriate care.

Crisis & support numbers



988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline - Call or text 988.

Available 24/7. Parents and caregivers can contact 988 for guidance when they are concerned about a child's suicidal thoughts.

Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741741.

Connects you with a trained crisis counselor by text.

911 or the Emergency Department - For an **immediate emergency** when your child may be unable to remain safe or needs urgent medical attention.

Wolfson Children's 24/7 Kids and Teens

Helpline - 904-202-7900 For emergency telephone support and assessment, crisis stabilization information and referral to follow-up care, if needed. The helpline, offered at no charge, is available for parents, kids and teens.