

CHILDHOOD DEPRESSION

WHAT DOES DEPRESSION LOOK LIKE IN CHILDREN?

- Mental health problems affect 1 in 5 children, at any given time.
- Depression impacts many areas of a child's functioning including cognitive, social and academic.
- Typical symptoms of depression include dysphoric mood (i.e., sadness), feelings of worthlessness, difficulties with sleeping (i.e., awakening in the middle of the night), suicidal ideation, and changes in eating patterns.
- Chances are higher that if a child experiences a depressive disorder, they may also have another mental health concern (most commonly anxiety or conduct).
- Symptoms of depression in children can differ from depressive symptoms in adults. For example, irritability, emotional outbursts, aggressive behaviors, withdrawn behaviors, and/or change in sociability can be a result of depression.
- Dysthymic Disorder is a more persistent, but milder form of depression and possibly less impairing. It may last over 3 years, compared to a depressive episode which lasts 1-2 weeks.
- A Depressive Disorder is diagnosed when a person experiences multiple depressive episodes (a one-week period of depressive symptoms). If left untreated, the typical duration of an adolescent depression will last 7-9 months, but 20%-40% will relapse in 2 years and 70% will relapse in 5 years.

WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

Family history is often seen in children with a depressive disorder. Although most children recover from a depressive episode, they are at a greater risk for reoccurrence or for the development of other mental health disorders over their lifespan.

HOW DO WE TREAT DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN?

- Research supports a combination of psychotherapy and medication (dependent upon the child's age and severity of the disorder).
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy is the most effective treatment for children experiencing depression. Cognitive-behavioral strategies include challenging negative self-statements, and modifying the ways they think and behave.
- For adolescents experiencing depression, interpersonal therapy has been proven to be effective in treating depressive symptoms. This type of therapy focuses on interpersonal interactions, problem-solving, and addresses relationship issues with family and friends.