



Pediatric Consultation Specialists, PLLC
Behavior ★ Learning ★ Success
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 in concentration or decision making, lack of energy (i.e., lethargic), 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 For example, irritability, emotional outbursts, aggressive behaviors, withdrawn behaviors, and/or change in sociability can be a result of depression.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



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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.