

## What is depression?

Depression is a mood disorder that causes feelings of sadness, anger, or irritability that last for more than a few weeks and often for a long time. Depression interferes with a person's ability to function, so it's best if it can be diagnosed and treated early.

## Isn't every one moody at this age?

A certain amount of moodiness is normal for pre-teens and teens. Hormone shifts combined with the demands of school, friends, and family, can cause children to feel angry, confused, or withdrawn from time to time. But depression is more than a temporary response to stress or disappointment. If a stressful or difficult event triggers symptoms that are severe or last longer than 2 weeks, you should talk to your child's doctor.

## What causes depression in children?

Children can become depressed if they experience the loss of a family member or friend or other traumatic event. They can become depressed if they're under more stress or feel more anxious than usual. Children with learning or attention disorders are at greater risk for depression. Depression can also run in families.

## What symptoms should I look for?

Because normal behavior changes from one childhood stage to the next, it can be hard to know if your child's just going through a difficult phase, or whether certain behaviors are symptoms of depression.

Here are some common symptoms to look for:

- Crying a lot, feeling hopeless or sad
- Lack of energy
- Loss of interest in friends or hobbies
- Changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Irritability or anger
- Trouble concentrating
- Low self-esteem
- Complaints of headaches or stomachaches
- Talk of hurting or killing oneself
- Disruptive behavior at home or school
- Problems getting along with others
- Talk of running away from home or dropping out of school

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**If your child has any of these symptoms for 2 weeks or longer, call your child's doctor. These could be signs of depression.**

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## What can I do?

It's important to get help for your child right away if you think he or she is depressed. Children and teens who are depressed are at a greater risk for:

- Committing suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Getting into trouble with the law
- Having problems at school
- Getting sick often

Parents and other adults should be concerned when a child is acting in a way that causes problems at home and in school. If you, your child's teacher, or another caring adult, is worried about changes in your child's behavior make an appointment with your child's doctor.

## How is depression treated?

Your child's doctor may refer you and your child to a mental health provider who can diagnose and treat depression in your child. Successful treatment may involve medication, counseling, and/or education.

## Where can I get more information?

### **Your child's primary care team**

If you're concerned about your child's behavior, make an appointment to see a member of his or her primary care team.

### **Kaiser Permanente Adolescent Center**

(located in Western Washington)

**1-800-422-7932**

The Adolescent Center's staff includes nurses, doctors, and therapists that are specially trained to handle adolescent medical and behavioral problems, including concerns about mental health, alcohol, drugs, chronic pain, attention deficit disorder, chronic illnesses, and eating disorders. The staff can answer questions over the phone or make an appointment to meet with you and your child in person.

### **Kaiser Permanente Behavioral Health Services**

Call for a confidential appointment toll-free **1-888-287-2680**.

### **Kaiser Permanente website**

Find more information on various health topics in our Health and Wellness Resources section at [kp.org/wa](http://kp.org/wa).

### **Kaiser Permanente Resource Line**

**1-800-992-2279**

The Resource Line can provide information on a variety of health topics related to child and adolescent health. Call weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### **Consulting Nurse Service**

Kaiser Permanente members who have medical questions or concerns can call the Consulting Nurse Service 24 hours a day, 1-800-297-6877.

## Depression in pre-teens and teens

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### How to tell if your child is depressed