

Identifying Depression

The information provided is from the [Mayo Clinic website](#) on teen depression. Please [visit their site](#) for more information and resources.

Depression is a serious mental health problem that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in activities. It affects how a teenager thinks, feels and behaves, and it can cause emotional, functional and physical problems. Although depression can occur at any time in life, symptoms may be different between teens and adults.

Depression isn't a weakness or something that can be overcome with willpower — it can have serious consequences and requires long-term treatment. For most teens, depression symptoms ease with treatment such as medication and counseling.

Signs and symptoms include a change in attitude and behavior that can cause significant distress and problems at school or home, in social activities, or in other areas of life. If depression signs and symptoms continue and impact your daily life, please speak with a parent/guardian, health care provider or counselor.

Symptoms can vary in severity, but changes in emotions & behavior may include the examples below.

Emotional changes could include:

- Feelings of sadness, which can include crying spells for no apparent reason
- Frustration or feelings of anger, even over small matters
- Feeling hopeless or empty
- Irritable or annoyed mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Loss of interest in, or conflict with, family and friends
- Low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Fixation on past failures or exaggerated self-blame or self-criticism
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure, and the need for excessive reassurance
- Trouble thinking, concentrating, making decisions and remembering things
- Ongoing sense that life and the future are grim and bleak
- Frequent thoughts of death, dying or suicide

Behavioral changes may include:

- Tiredness and loss of energy
- Insomnia or sleeping too much
- Changes in appetite — decreased appetite and weight loss, or increased cravings for food and weight gain
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Agitation or restlessness — for example, pacing, hand-wringing or an inability to sit still
- Slowed thinking, speaking or body movements
- Frequent complaints of unexplained body aches and headaches, which may include frequent visits to the school nurse
- Social isolation
- Poor school performance or frequent absences from school
- Less attention to personal hygiene or appearance
- Angry outbursts, disruptive or risky behavior, or other acting-out behaviors
- Self-harm — for example, cutting, burning, or excessive piercing or tattooing
- Making a suicide plan or a suicide attempt



If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, call 911 immediately.

If you have any symptoms or concerns, please speak with a parent/guardian, health care provider or counselor right away.