

Major Depressive Disorder

Behavioral Health Tips

Major Depressive Disorder can affect people of any age, including young children. Major Depressive Disorder, unlike normal periods of sadness, is defined as a period of at least 2 weeks in which a child, adolescent or adult feels a persistent depressed mood or loss interest in previously enjoyed activities. During that time the person may also experience other symptoms (including changes in sleep, concentration, and energy levels) which affect function. Depression is a medical illness, and unlike other normal sad states (like being sad after a bad report card or argument with a loved one) the person with depression may not be able to recover without treatments. If left untreated, depression will cause more permanent changes in the brain (including changes that affect attention and learning) that can severely impact a child or adolescent's ability to function in school. Most concerning, depression can lead to suicidal thoughts in people of all ages. These thoughts may then lead to suicidal attempts that can cause disability or loss of life.

Warning Signs:

Thinking about suicide or a suicidal attempt is usually a clear sign of depression or other psychiatric illness and needs to be urgently evaluated by a psychiatrist. In addition children and adolescents with depression show a persistent low mood or decreased ability to enjoy activities that last more than 2 weeks. Some children (especially in the younger ages) may not show a low mood, but may rather be unusually irritable or angry. There may or may not be a precipitating stressor, and the low mood may be beyond what would be expected in someone with a similar stressor. Changes in sleep (usually difficulty falling or staying asleep, but occasionally increased sleep) and changes in appetite (usually less appetite but at times more appetite) are common. Difficulties concentrating and making decisions are also common. Your child may also express excessive guilt, hopelessness, or worthlessness. Energy levels may be low, with increased feelings of fatigue and slowing of movements (yet again some kids, especially in the younger age groups, may experience more agitation and restlessness). Decreased interests in

For more information

Cohen Children's Medical Center

Pediatric Behavioral Health Emergency Service
Ground Floor, Cohen's Emergency Room

718-470-3768

Pediatric Behavioral Health Urgent Care
269-01 76th Avenue, Suite 161
New Hyde Park, NY 11040

718-470-3148

Pediatric Behavioral Health- Rockville Centre
100 Merrick Road
Rockville Centre, NY 11570

516-927-1630

Pediatric Behavioral Health- Mineola
156 1st St
Mineola, NY 11501

516-321-5770

Pediatric Behavioral Health- Commack
2171 Jericho Tpke, Suite 345
Commack, NY 11725

631-775-3280

activities previously enjoyed, isolating from people may be other signs. Depression needs to be diagnosed by a psychiatrist or other doctor, as other medical illnesses can cause the symptoms of major depressive disorder (for example thyroid problems, heart issues, or medications) may need to be looked into with blood tests or other medical studies before a diagnosis of depression is made.

Pediatric Behavioral Health

How Parents Can Help:

Depression can be treated with psychotherapy and/or medications, depending how severe the depression is in your child. Early treatment is key, so talk to your child's pediatrician about a referral to a therapist and/or psychiatrist as early as possible. At home, it is important to keep the child safe by maintaining sharps, guns, and pills locked in a safe container or cabinet away from your child's reach, especially if your child has thoughts of death and/or suicide. Validation of the child's feelings, acceptance of depression as a medical illness, and recognition that it is not the child's fault is also important. Encouraging your child to stay active and engaged at home and outside may also help improve your child's mood, but will likely not be enough without medical treatment.

Treatments:

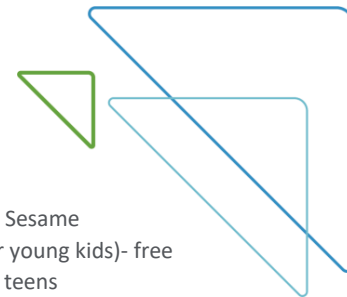
Patients will often get therapy, medications, or both. Medications include anti-depressant medications and medications that help other mood states. Medications for major depression disorder are well-studied, very effective and have mostly mild side effects. Therapy includes a specific type of therapy known as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) that is specifically tailored to change how one thinks about the self, as well as the world and its various stressors.

Additional Information:

- 1) https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Centers/Depression_Resource_Center/Home.aspx
- 2) <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/depression-in-children-and-adolescents.shtml/american>
- 3) <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Depression>
- 4) <https://medlineplus.gov/depression.html>
- 5) <https://kidshealth.org/>
- 6) VIDEO:
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC6061FE13A8FD250>

BOOKS:

- 1) *Can I tell you about depression?: a guide for friends, family and professionals* / Dowrick, Christopher; Martin, Susan; Medaglia, Mike. -- London: Jessica Kingsley, 2015. This illustrated book is an ideal introduction to depression - a condition that can be particularly difficult for children to understand.
- 2) *Depression and other mood disorders* / Field, Jon Eben. -- St. Catharines, ON: Crabtree Publishing Company, 2014.
- 3) *Depression and your child: a guide for parents and caregivers* / Serani, Deborah. -- Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013. This book contains specific tips, recommendations, and case examples to help make parenting a depressed child less challenging. It provides parents and caregivers an understanding of pediatric depression, its causes, its symptoms, and its treatments.



"APPS"

1. Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame (self-regulation skills for young kids)- free
2. What's Up- CBT app for teens
3. Pacifica – CBT app for teens
4. Happify- coping skills, gratitude exercises
5. You Are Important – Depression, Suicide and Bullying Prevention Video App by Wonderific®: Rated 12+
6. MoodTools. –Rate and track your mood, also includes safety plan
7. Daylio Journal. Track your mood, provides helpful tips for coping.