

# Oppositional Defiant Disorder

## Behavioral Health Tips

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is a persistent pattern of behaviors exhibited by children or adolescents. Those with ODD can often appear angry or irritable, they can ignore or willfully disregard authority figures, they often blame others for their own mistakes, and they are often argumentative. These behaviors can appear in one setting --at home, at extracurricular activities, or at school --or across multiple settings. Those with ODD typically do not physically attack others, they typically do not steal, they typically do not destroy property, and they typically do not run away from home; these behaviors are often associated with a somewhat similar but notably different diagnosis: Conduct Disorder (CD).

### Warning Signs:

ODD symptoms typically start slowly as children and adolescents increase unwanted behaviors and challenge limits. ODD can appear after specific times of transition, i.e. moving to a new school, parental separation, or a death of a close relative. There is a strong genetic component to ODD. Families that have one or more members diagnosed with ODD, CD, or anti-social personality disorder can have up to a 50% greater likelihood of developing symptoms of ODD. Children with ADHD are at a higher risk of developing ODD. Parents that notice an increasing pattern of ODD behaviors should speak to their pediatrician or a mental health professional.

### How Parents Can Help:

Parenting is difficult but trying to be as consistent as possible with children and adolescents with ODD symptoms can be very helpful. Parents can be understanding that childhood and adolescence is a challenging period but can still implement consistent strategies of parenting. Some studies show that one of the factors that contributes to ODD is inconsistent parental contact. Parents can attempt to normalize their schedules as much as possible and ensure certain touchtone moments of the day, i.e. wake-up, breakfast, cooking and eating dinner, are consistently shared family experiences. Parents who suspect their child has ODD can also work with professionals to institute behavioral treatments in their homes.

**When your child is first diagnosed with ODD, it's helpful to learn as much as you can about the disorder.** Not only will this help you learn methods for coping with the behaviors, but it can be

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## For more information

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### Cohen Children's Medical Center

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

**516-927-1630**

Pediatric Behavioral Health- Mineola  
156 First Street  
Mineola, NY 11501

**516-321-5770**

reassuring to learn that the majority of children outgrow the disorder. Knowing this alone may give you more strength to cope with difficult behaviors today.

### Working with Your Child's School

If your child is in school, it's important to meet with your child's teacher, guidance counselor or school psychologist. Combining efforts at school with positive parenting at home is most effective. Special education services can also provide support and accommodations for your child. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law which mandates that children with disabilities be provided with services to allow him to function in the school setting. This usually requires that the disorder impairs his academic performance. You can request an evaluation for your child at any time. If your child does not qualify for IDEA (usually under the "other health impaired" category) he may still qualify for an individual accommodation plan under Section 504.[4] You may also



wish to contact your school district, State Department of Education, or your state Parent Training and Information Center.

## Disciplining an ODD Child

Having a child with ODD can be difficult to manage, but finding opportunities to give positive attention (instead of the constantly provoked negative attention) can really help. Even though negative

consequences will likely be needed at times, positive attention is often more effective. The parenting programs below are all examples of positive parenting and can give concrete tips on how to utilize positive discipline.

## Parenting programs:

1. Collaborative and Proactive Solutions
2. Parent-Child Interaction Therapy
3. The Incredible Years

## Treatments:

Treatment of ODD can include a variety of behavioral and pharmaceutical interventions.

1. Cognitive problem-solving skills training
2. Family therapy
3. Medications
4. Parent management training
5. School-based programs
6. Social skills programs

Of note, there are not any specific medications recommended for ODD, and medications alone should not be used to treat the condition. Medications may be helpful, however, in controlling some of the behaviors and for coexisting mental health conditions, such as ADHD and anxiety.

## Additional Resources:

1. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry info and guide on ODD:
  - a. [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-With-Oppositional-Defiant-Disorder-072.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-With-Oppositional-Defiant-Disorder-072.aspx)
2. Attitude Magazine info on ODD:
  - a. <https://www.additudemag.com/what-is-oppositional-defiant-disorder/>

## Books:

1. Anger Management Workbook for Kids by Samantha Sowden
2. Overcoming Oppositional Defiant Behavioral by Cathryn Guglielminetti
3. 10 Days to a Less Defiant Child by Jeffrey Bernstein