

Childhood Depression

Regional Headquarters Materials

Kids Get Blue, Too

10% of children under the age of 12 suffer from depression. Because they can't talk about their feelings as well as adults, it's more difficult to diagnose childhood depression but it is clear that children suffer from depression just as adults do.

Red flags

Your child may be depressed if she/he displays any of the following signs:

- Changes in normal sleep patterns or appetite
- School problems or refusal to go to school
- Talk about feeling unhappy or not liking himself
- Sadness lasting a week or more
- Lack of enthusiasm for usual play activities
- Any significant change in the child's usual behavior
- Preoccupation with death or talk of suicide.

Prevention

Don't panic if your child is a little moody. While depression occurs more frequently in children than was once believed, it is not epidemic.

To help your child avoid depression or weather it successfully –

- Help your child like himself. Praise successes and provide extra help when needed.
- Be alert to changes in your child's usual disposition, especially if they last more than a week.
- Don't hide your feelings about family problems such as divorce or illness.
- Encourage your child to talk about what bothers him. Question for specifics and don't tease if the cause seems trivial to you.
- Take any mention of suicide seriously. Get professional help for any child who talks about suicide.

Children imitate parents, and depressed parents raise depressed children. If you yourself are suffering from depression, the best way to protect your child is to seek prompt professional help for yourself.