

Depression in Children

January 2009

Parenting *Rules!*

Children aren't immune to depression...



Five percent of children in the United States suffer from depression. Boys under the age of 10 are more likely to experience symptoms of depression. However, by age 16 more girls than boys suffer bouts of depression.

What causes depression in children?

- A family disruption such as divorce, a move or serious financial difficulties.
- The death of a family member or loved one.
- Witnessing or experiencing domestic violence.
- A chronic illness such as Diabetes or Cancer.
- A family history of depression.
- Biochemical disturbances.

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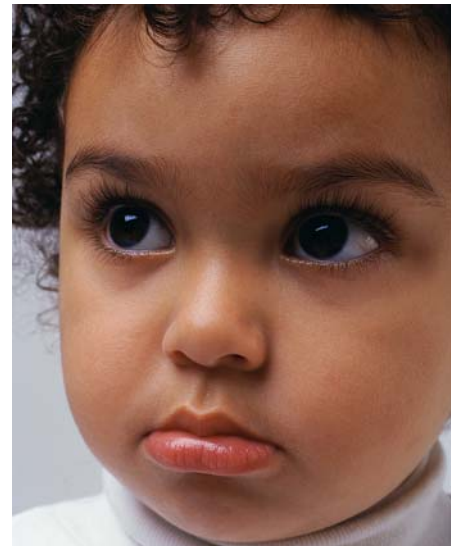
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How can you tell if your child is depressed?

Childhood depression isn't always easy to identify. According to Vivian Weisman, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association of Rhode Island, depression is an illness which can range in severity from interference with normal family, school and friendship activities to self harm, including "cutting" and even suicide.

If your child begins to exhibit any of the following symptoms for **longer than two weeks**, he or she could be experiencing depression:

- ✓ Persistent sadness
- ✓ Loss of interest in favorite activities
- ✓ Under or over-eating
- ✓ Irritability / anger
- ✓ Increased sensitivity to criticism
- ✓ Feelings of worthlessness, despair or hopelessness
- ✓ Frequent crying or reduced emotional expression
- ✓ Many physical complaints such as headaches, stomach aches and fatigue
- ✓ Thought of suicide or talk of death
- ✓ Changes in sleep patterns
- ✓ Exaggerated fears or separation anxiety
- ✓ Sudden drop in school performance



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Advice for parents...



If you suspect that your child is suffering from depression, contact your pediatrician or family doctor **immediately** to schedule an evaluation. Your doctor can determine if your child needs a psychological evaluation and can refer you to a mental health professional.

If your child is depressed, she/he will need your support!

“The good and hopeful news is that depression is treatable at all stages, thus preventing more serious forms of the illness.” – Vivian Weisman

Here are some things you can do to ensure your child’s healthy development:

- **Follow your doctors recommendations** and keep all your child’s appointments with specialists
- Give your child **lots of love**
- **Spend time listening** to your child in a caring and non-judgmental way
- Encourage him/her to keep to a **healthy sleep pattern**
- Provide your child with regular **healthy meals**
- **Be patient** and understand that your child is going through a difficult time and needs your help
- Help your child to **connect with her/his peers**
- Participate with your child in his/her **favorite activities**

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Resources for Parents...

The following are places to get information and help on understanding your child's depression:

Mental Health Association of RI

500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860
401.726.2285 www.mhari.org

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20016-3007
202.966.7300 www.aacap.org

The Samaritans of Rhode Island

1.800.365.4044

Parent Support Network of Rhode Island

1395 Atwood Avenue, Suite 114, Johnston, Rhode Island 02919
401.467.6855, toll free: 800.483.8844 www.psnri.org

Bradley Hospital

1011 Veterans Memorial Pkwy. East Providence, RI 02915
401.432.1000 www.lifespan.org/bradley

Rhode Island Council of Community Health Organizations

40 Sharpe Drive, Suite 3, Cranston, RI 02920
(401) 228-7990 www.riccmho.org

ABOUT PARENTING RULES! E-NEWS...



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Prevent Child Abuse Rhode Island
500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860
ph: 401.728.7920 fax: 410.724.5850
www.preventchildabuse-ri.org

Please share this information with the families in your programs. Thank you!