



Pediatric Depression

Pediatric Depression - Overview & Statistics

- Typically presents in primary care
- Common in children and adolescents
- Typically presents with other associated diagnoses
- Often impairs social functioning
- Extremely undertreated condition
 - Rough estimates approximate rates to be as high as 40% pediatric patients with depressive disorders that are not diagnosed or treated

Girls Vs Boys

- **During puberty** → females are 2x more likely to develop depression than males
- **Before puberty** → males are more likely to develop depression

Pediatric Depression - Risks

- Low birth weight
- Family history of depression or anxiety including postpartum depression
- Family dysfunction
- Exposure to trauma early on in life - neglect, abuse, loss.
- Social stress such as bullying or difficulty with school
- Gender dysphoria or sexual preference
- Current learning disabilities or ADHD
- Traumatic brain injuries
- Chronic illness

How do I know my child is depressed?

Common Signs



- **Depressed mood**
 - How may this look? Seeming hopeless or having a gloomy outlook, perceiving others as not caring for them, and being seemingly hyper aware of unpleasant situations



- **Irritable mood**
 - Sometimes kids have a hard time expressing themselves so the depression manifests as anger or irritability
 - Being “annoyed” by everybody or “grouchy”
 - Negative or quick to pick fights

Other Signs of Pediatric Depression

- **Changes in appetite**



- Especially common in children - may eat more or less than they typically do
- May just present as a change in diet where they are eating much more junk food and carbs

- **Changes in sleep**



- Also very common in children
- May sleep too much or barely sleep
- Can sleep normal hours but consistently wake up throughout the night
- Difficulty getting out of bed



- **Diminished pleasure or interest in activities**
 - Things become “boring,” “stupid,” or “uninteresting”
- **Fatigue or loss of energy**
 - May appear unmotivated, taking lots of naps throughout the day, avoidance of responsibilities
- **Feelings of worthlessness or guilt or like they are “not good enough”**
- **Impaired concentration and memory**
 - A child who typically does well in school, all the sudden comes home with very poor grades

The Biggest Warning Sign

- The most important but often the most silent sign of depression is **recurring thoughts of death or suicide**
 - These signs do not always have to be blatant statements made by the child indicating these thoughts or ideas
 - **What other ways can we spot suicidal thoughts?**
 - Listening to music with harmful, suicidal, or morbid themes all the time
 - Becoming preoccupied with movies or books with lots of morbidity in them
 - Passive thoughts (“everybody else would be better off if I was not here”)
- It is even more important to recognize suicidal plans, attempts, or pacts where there is a set plan of action to these thoughts or feelings

The Depressive Cycle

- The consequences of depression on school & friends can reinforce a child's depression
- Adolescents in the teen years are especially vulnerable to this cycle because these are the years they are trying to define themselves



Why is it so important to catch and treat pediatric depression?

Medical outcomes of untreated kids with depression include

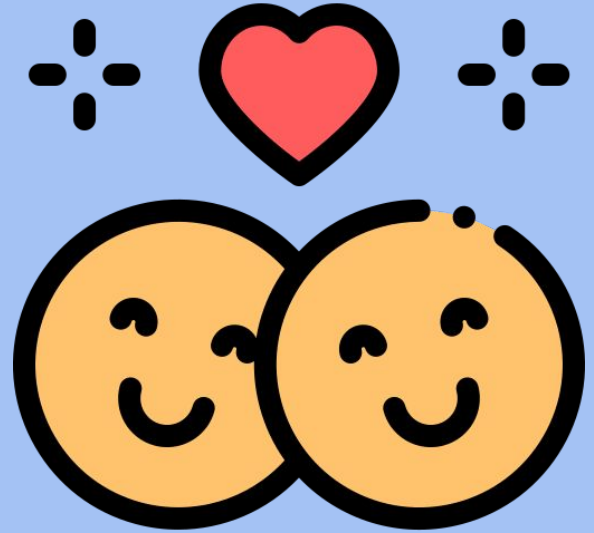
- Problems with the cardiovascular system (involves the heart & blood)
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Substance abuse
 - Smoking
 - Drinking alcohol

How to approach a child suspected of having depression

- **Do not stigmatize!**
 - Normalizing and validating the feelings the child has helps to encourage them opening up and seeking help to treat the depression
- **Better safe than sorry!**
 - See your pediatrician with any concerns, even if you are not completely sure your children is experiencing depression
 - Screening tools can be used to determine if what your child is experiencing is depression so that they can be appropriately guided to the right resources

Treatment

- **Treating pediatric depression takes a team!**
 - Support from your pediatrician, a psychiatrist when needed, parents and family members, as well as important figures in school can all work together to help a child with depression



Our options

- **Medicine**
- **Therapy**
- **Combination of the two**

References

https://www-uptodate-com.proxy.library.stonybrook.edu/contents/pediatric-unipolar-depression-epidemiology-clinical-features-assessment-and-diagnosis?search=pediatric%20depression%20&source=search_result&selectedTitle=3~150&usage_type=default&display_rank=3

https://www-uptodate-com.proxy.library.stonybrook.edu/contents/depression-in-children-and-adolescents-beyond-the-basics?search=pediatric%20depression&topicRef=1231&source=see_link

https://www-uptodate-com.proxy.library.stonybrook.edu/contents/overview-of-prevention-and-treatment-for-pediatric-depression?search=pediatric%20depression&source=search_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage_type=default&display_rank=1