**Depression in Children and Young People**

**Depression does not only affect adults. Children and young people can get depressed too.**

It's important to get help early if you think your child may be depressed. The longer it goes on, the more likely it is to disrupt your child's life and turn into a long-term problem.

**Signs of depression in children**

Symptoms of depression in children often include:

* sadness, or a low mood that does not go away
* being irritable or grumpy all the time
* not being interested in things they used to enjoy
* feeling tired and exhausted a lot of the time

Your child may also:

* have trouble sleeping or sleep more than usual
* not be able to concentrate
* interact less with friends and family
* be indecisive
* not have much confidence
* eat less than usual or overeat
* have big changes in weight
* seem unable to relax or be more lethargic than usual
* talk about feeling guilty or worthless
* feel empty or unable to feel emotions (numb)
* have thoughts about [suicide](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/help-for-suicidal-thoughts/) or [self-harming](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/self-harm/getting-help/)
* actually self-harm, for example, cutting their skin or taking an overdose

Some children have problems with [anxiety](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/anxiety-in-children/) as well as depression. Some also have physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach aches.

Problems at school and problem behaviour can be a sign of depression in children and young people.

Older children who are depressed may misuse drugs or alcohol.

**Why is my child depressed?**

Things that increase the risk of depression in children include:

* family difficulties
* bullying
* physical, emotional or [sexual abuse](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/spotting-signs-of-child-sexual-abuse/)
* a family history of depression or other mental health problems

Sometimes depression is triggered by a difficult event, such as parents separating, a bereavement or problems with school or other children.

Often, it's caused by a mixture of things. For example, your child may have a tendency to get depression and also have experienced some difficult life events.

**If you think your child is depressed**

If you think your child may be depressed, it's important to talk to them. Try to find out what's troubling them and how they're feeling.

See some tips on [talking to younger children about their feelings](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/talk-to-children-about-feelings/) and [talking to teenagers](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/talk-to-your-teenager/).

Whatever is causing the problem, take it seriously. It may not seem like a big deal to you, but it could be a major problem for your child.

If your child does not want to talk to you, let them know you're concerned about them and you're there if they need you.

Encourage them to talk to someone else they trust, such as another family member, a friend or someone at school.

It may be helpful for you to talk to other people who know your child, including their other parent.

You could also contact their school to ask if the staff have any concerns.

**When to get medical help**

If you think your child is depressed, or you're concerned about their general wellbeing, make an appointment with them to see a GP.

If necessary, the GP can refer your child to a local [children and young people's mental health services](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/mental-health-support/mental-health-services/) for specialist help.

CYPMHS is used as a term for all services that work with children and young people who have difficulties with their mental health or wellbeing. You may also be able to refer your child without seeing a GP.

Read more about [where to get mental health support](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/mental-health-support/how-to-get-support/where-to-get-support/).

**Further support**

If you need support during a mental health crisis or emergency, read about where to get [urgent help for mental health](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/).

If you're worried about any aspect of your child's mental health, you can call the charity YoungMinds' free parents' helpline for advice on [0808 802 5544](tel:0808%20802%205544) from Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm.

[The YoungMinds website also has mental health support and advice for your child](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/your-guide-to-support/)

**More in**[**Advice for parents**](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/)

* [Children and bereavement](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/children-and-bereavement/)
* [Helping your child with anger issues](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/help-your-child-with-anger-issues/)
* [Anxiety disorders in children](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/anxiety-disorders-in-children/)
* [Anxiety in children](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/anxiety-in-children/)
* Depression in children and young people
* [Talking to your child about feelings](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/talk-to-children-about-feelings/)
* [Teen aggression and arguments](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/teen-aggression-and-arguments/)
* [Coping with your teenager](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/cope-with-your-teenager/)
* [Worried about your teenager?](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/worried-about-your-teenager/)
* [Help your child beat exam stress](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/help-your-child-beat-exam-stress/)
* [Talking to your teenager](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/talk-to-your-teenager/)

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[Depression in children and young people - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/children-depressed-signs/)