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# Child Mental Health

It's important to recognize and treat mental illnesses in children early on. Once mental illness develops, it becomes a regular part of your child's behavior. This makes it more difficult to treat.

But it's not always easy to know when your child has a serious problem. Everyday stresses can cause changes in your child's behavior. For example, getting a new brother or sister or going to a new school may cause a child to temporarily act out. Warning signs that it might be a more serious problem include:

- Problems in more than one setting (at school, at home, with peers)
- Changes in appetite or sleep
- Social withdrawal or fear of things he or she did not used to be not afraid of
- Returning to behaviors more common in younger children, such as bedwetting
- Signs of being upset, such as sadness or tearfulness
- Signs of self-destructive behavior, such as head-banging or suddenly getting hurt often
- Repeated thoughts of death

To diagnose mental health problems, the doctor or mental health specialist looks at your child's signs and symptoms, medical history, and family history. Treatments include medicines and talk therapy.

*NIH: National Institute of Mental Health*

## Start Here

- About Children's Mental Health [https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/about/] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health]
  NIH (National Institute of Mental Health)

- Children and Mental Health: Is This Just a Stage? [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/children-and-mental-health]
  NIH (National Institute of Mental Health)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/espanol/los-ninos-y-la-salud-mental]

- Emotional Disturbance [https://www.parentcenterhub.org/emotionaldisturbance/] (Center for Parent Information and Resources)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.parentcenterhub.org/emocional/]

## Diagnosis and Tests

- Comprehensive Psychiatric Evaluation [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Comprehensive-Psychiatric-Evaluation-052.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Spanish/Evaluacion-Siquiatrica-Comprensiva-052.aspx]

- Mental Health Screening [https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/mental-health-screening/] NIH (National Library of Medicine)
  Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/evaluacion-de-salud-mental/]

- Mental Illness in Children: Know the Signs [https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/mental-illness-in-children/art-20046577?p=1] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Also in Spanish [https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/mental-illness-in-children/art-20046577?p=1]

- When to Seek Help for Your Child [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/When-To-Seek-Help-For-Your-Child-024.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Spanish/Sepa-Cuando-Buscar-Ayuda-para-su-Hijo-Hija-024.aspx]

## Learn More

- Depression in Children and Teens [https://familydoctor.org/depression-in-children-and-teens/?adfree=true]
  (American Academy of Family Physicians)

## Treatments and Therapies

- Mental Health Medications [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications]
  NIH (National Institute of Mental Health)

- Psychotherapies [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies] NIH (National Institute of Mental Health)

- Psychotherapies for Children and Adolescents [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Psychotherapies-For-Children-And-Adolescents-086.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Spanish/Que-es-la-Psicoterapia-de-Ni%C3%B1os-y-Adolescentes-053.aspx]

- Questions to Ask Before Psychiatric Hospitalization of Your Child or Adolescent [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/11-Questions-To-Ask-Before-Psychiatric-Hospitalization-Of-Your-Child-Or-Adolescent-032.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Spanish/11-Preguntas-a-Hacerse-Antes-de-Comenzar-el-Tratamiento-Siquiatrico-de-su-Nino-o-Adolescente-032.aspx]

- Residential Treatment Programs [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Residential-Treatment-Programs-097.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)

- Taking Your Child to a Therapist [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/finding-therapist.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/finding-therapist.html]

## Related Issues

- 3 Ways to Help When Kids Feel Lonely [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/help-lonely-child.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/help-lonely-child.html]

- About Adverse Childhood Experiences [https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Buffering Childhood Stress: Safe, Secure Relationships For Better Health [https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2024/07/buffering-childhood-stress] NIH (National Institutes of Health)
  Also in Spanish [https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/aliviando-el-estres-infantil]

- Building Resilience in Children [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Children.aspx] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/building-resilience/paginas/building-resilience-in-children.aspx]

- Children and Grief [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Grief-008.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Spanish/Los-Ninos-y-la-Pena-por-la-Muerte-de-un-ser-Querido-008.aspx]

- Hearing Voices and Seeing Things [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Hearing-Voices-and-Seeing-Things-102.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)

- Helping Children and Adolescents Cope With Traumatic Events [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-disasters-and-other-traumatic-events] NIH (National Institute of Mental Health)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/espanol/como-ayudar-los-ninos]

- How Can Social Connection Help Kids and Teens Feel Less Lonely? [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/social-connection.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/social-connection.html]

- Sleep Tips for Your Family's Mental Health [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/sleep/Pages/Sleep-and-Mental-Health.aspx] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/healthy-living/sleep/paginas/sleep-and-mental-health.aspx]

- Storm Stress: Helping Kids Stay Calm [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/storms-calm.html]
  Easy-to-Read (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/storms-calm.html]

## Specifics

- Anxiety Disorders [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/anxiety-disorders.html]

- Bipolar Disorder in Children and Teens [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens]
  NIH> (National Institute of Mental Health)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/espanol/el-trastorno-bipolar-en-los-ninos-y-los-adolescentes]

- Childhood Depression: What Parents Need to Know [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/understanding-depression.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/understanding-depression.html]

- Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/disruptive-mood-dysregulation-disorder-dmdd] NIH> (National Institute of Mental Health)

- Helping Children Handle Stress [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Helping-Children-Handle-Stress.aspx] (American Academy of Pediatrics)

- Separation Anxiety [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/sep-anxiety.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/separation-anxiety.html]

## Statistics and Research

- Green Spaces May Improve Kids' Mental Health [https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2024/06/green-spaces-may-improve-kids-mental-health] NIH> (National Institutes of Health)
  Also in Spanish [https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/los-espacios-verdes-podrian-mejorar-la-salud-mental-de-los]

## Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Child Mental Disorders [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22mental+disorders%22&aggFilters=ages:child,status:not%20rec] NIH> (National Institutes of Health)

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Child Mental Health [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?term=%22mental+health%22&aggFilters=ages:child,status:not%20rec] NIH> (National Institutes of Health)

## Journal Articles

**References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)**

- Article: Evidence based consensus statements for digital tools to address youth mental... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40753263]

- Article: The relationship between parental psychological well-being and preadolescents' social media use. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40745433]

- Article: Off-label use of psychotropic drugs in youth. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40739649]

- Child Mental Health -- see more articles [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Psychology%2C+Child%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+child+%5Bmh%5D+OR+%22Mental+Health%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+child+%5Bmh%5D+OR+%22Child+Psychiatry%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+child+%5Bmh%5D+OR+%22Mental+Disorders%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+child+%5Bmh%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+2+Years%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+]

# Find an Expert

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry [https://www.aacap.org/]

- Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist Finder
  [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_Youth/CAP_Finder/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resources/CAP_Finder.aspx]
  (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)

- Help for Mental Illnesses [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help] NIH⟩ (National Institute of Mental Health)
  Also in Spanish [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help/ayuda-para-la-salud-mental]

- National Institute of Mental Health [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/] NIH⟩
  Also in Spanish [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/espanol]

- Psychologist Locator [https://locator.apa.org/?partner=nlm] (American Psychological Association)

# Children

- Coping With Sad Feelings [https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/sadness.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/sadness.html]

- Get Excited about Mental Health Research! [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/sites/default/files/documents/health/publications/get-excited-about-mental-health-research-508.pdf] NIH⟩ (National Institute of Mental Health) - **PDF**
  Also in Spanish [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/sites/default/files/documents/health/publications/entusiasmate-con-las-investigaciones-sobre-salud-mental.pdf]

- Going to a Therapist [https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/going-to-therapist.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/going-to-therapist.html]

- How to Talk With Kids About Tragedies & Other Traumatic News Events [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/talking-to-children-about-tragedies-and-other-news-events.aspx]

- Stand Up to Stress! [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stand-up-to-stress]
  NIH⟩ (National Institute of Mental Health) - **PDF**
  Also in Spanish [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/espanol/hazle-frente-al-estres]

- Talking about Your Feelings [https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/talk-feelings.html] (Nemours Foundation)
  Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/talk-feelings.html]

- What to Do When You Feel Lonely [https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/feel-lonely.html] *Easy-to-Read* (Nemours Foundation)

# Patient Handouts

- Generalized anxiety disorder in children [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007687.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
  Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007687.htm]

- Reactive attachment disorder of infancy or early childhood [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001547.htm]
  (Medical Encyclopedia)
  Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001547.htm]

- Stress in childhood [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002059.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
  Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002059.htm]

- Traumatic events and children [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000588.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
  Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000588.htm]

Children and grief [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000749.htm]

Generalized anxiety disorder in children [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007687.htm]

Reactive attachment disorder of infancy or early childhood [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001547.htm]

Stereotypic movement disorder [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001548.htm]

Stress in childhood [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002059.htm]

Traumatic events and children [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000588.htm]

## Related Health Topics

Bullying and Cyberbullying [https://medlineplus.gov/bullyingandcyberbullying.html]

Child Behavior Disorders [https://medlineplus.gov/childbehaviordisorders.html]

Mental Disorders [https://medlineplus.gov/mentaldisorders.html]

Mental Health [https://medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth.html]

## National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Child Mental Health* is the National Institute of Mental Health [http://www.nimh.nih.gov/]

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