



Child Builders

Houston's Advocates for Mental Health in Children

Recognizing Childhood Depression

Source of information: SAMHSA

When your child has a high fever, you recognize this as a warning sign and get medical advice. Mental health problems can be more difficult to recognize. As many as one in every 33 children and one in eight adolescents may have depression. Depression is a form of mental illness that affects the whole person—it impacts the way one feels, thinks and acts. Depression in children can lead to school failure, family discord, violence, alcohol or other drug use and even suicide.

Clinical depression goes beyond sadness. It's not having a bad day or coping with a major loss, such as the death of a parent, grandparent or even favorite pet. It's not a personal weakness or a character flaw. Children suffering from clinical depression cannot simply "snap out of it." Young people with depression may have a hard time coping with everyday activities and responsibilities, have difficulty getting along with others, and suffer from low self-esteem.

Signs of depression often include:

- Sadness that won't go away
- Hopelessness
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Missed school or poor school performance
- Thoughts about death or suicide
- Aches and pains that don't get better with treatment

If you as parents or other important adults in a child or teenager's life suspect a problem with depression, you should:

- Make careful notes about behaviors that concern you. Note how long the behaviors have been going on, how often they occur, and how severe they seem.
- Get an appointment with a mental health professional or the child's doctor for evaluation and diagnosis.
- Get accurate information from libraries, hotlines, or other sources.
- Ask questions about treatment and services.
- Talk to other families in the community.
- Find family network organizations.

Early diagnosis and treatment are essential for children with depression. Children who exhibit symptoms of depression should be referred to, and further evaluated, by a mental health professional that specializes in treating depression in children and teenagers.

ChildBuilders (formerly known as HAMIC), founded in 1974, is a non-profit organization that provides innovative programs to educate parents, children, teachers and the community about the emotional well-being of children and their families. www.childbuilders.org ChildBuilders Community Education.

For further information & referral
call your child's school counselor

DePelchin Children's Center	713-730-2335
ESCAPE Family Resource Center	713-942-9500
Harris County Psychiatric Center	713-741-5000
Jewish Family Service	713-667-9336
Mental Health Association	713-522-5161
MHMRA of Harris County	713-970-7070
NAMI Metro Houston	281-579-3750
United Way of Texas Gulf Coast	211 or 713-957-4357

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