



Speaking Out for the Well-Being of Children

FACT SHEET

CHILDHOOD DEPRESSION: Tips for Parents

All children “feel blue” from time to time, have a bad day or are sad. However, when these feelings persist and begin to interfere with a child’s daily life, depression could be the cause.

It is important to understand that depression is not a personal weakness, a character flaw or a mood that a child can simply “snap out of.” Depression is different from feelings of grief or sorrow that follow a major loss, such as a death in the family. It is a common mental health problem that affects people of all ages, including children. In fact, according to the Center for Mental Health Services, as many as 1 in 33 children and 1 in 8 teens have depression. Fortunately, depression is very treatable.

What can parents do if they suspect their child may have depression?

- Talk to your child about how he or she is feeling.
- Educate yourself about depression. The more you know, the better position you are in to help your child.
- Know the signs of depression, and note the duration, frequency and severity of troubling behavior.
- If your child is struggling with any combination of the signs of depression for more than two weeks in different settings (e.g., at home, at school, on the playground), consult a mental health professional or pediatrician.
- Discuss all available treatment options with your child’s doctor, and carefully weigh all the risks and benefits associated with each treatment. A comprehensive treatment plan may include psychotherapy, ongoing evaluation and, in some cases, medication. You and your child, if possible, should fully participate in the development of a treatment plan.
- Talk to other families in your community or find a family network organization to help you better understand how depression can affect your child and your entire family.
- Know that treatment works and that your child will get better.

Information via Mental Health America. Please visit <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/> for more information.

Tennessee Voices for Children speaks out as active advocates for the emotional and behavioral well-being of children and their families. We provide Advocacy, Training, Support, Referral, Prevention, and Early Intervention Services.



*For more information, visit <http://www.tnvoices.org> or call 1-800-670-9882.
Offices in Nashville, Memphis, Knoxville, Jackson, and Columbia.*