

FACTS *for* FAMILIES

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Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder

Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder (DMDD) is a relatively new diagnosis in the field of mental health. Children with DMDD have severe and frequent temper tantrums that interfere with their ability to function at home, in school or with their friends. Some of these children were previously diagnosed with bipolar disorder, even though they often did not have all the signs and symptoms. Research has also demonstrated that children with DMDD usually do not go on to have bipolar disorder in adulthood. They are more likely to develop problems with depression or anxiety.

Many children are irritable, upset or moody from time to time. Occasional temper tantrums are also a normal part of growing up. However, when children are usually irritable or angry or when temper tantrums are frequent, intense and ongoing, it may be signs of a mood disorder such as DMDD.

Symptoms of DMDD

The symptoms of DMDD include:

- Severe temper outbursts at least three times a week
- Sad, irritable or angry mood almost every day
- Reaction is bigger than expected
- Child must be at least six years old
- Symptoms begin before age ten
- Symptoms are present for at least a year
- Child has trouble functioning in more than one place (e.g., home, school and/or with friends)

Some of the symptoms associated with DMDD are also present in other child psychiatric disorders, such as depression, bipolar disorder and oppositional defiant disorder. Some children with DMDD also have a second disorder, such as problems with attention or anxiety. This is why it is particularly important to get a comprehensive evaluation by a trained and qualified mental health professional.

What To Do

The treatment for DMDD will be individualized to the needs of the particular child and his or her family. It may include individual therapy, as well as work with the child's family and/or school. It may also include the use of medication to help address specific symptoms.

Parents of children with DMDD should learn as much as they can about the disorder. They should ask lots of questions about the risks and benefits of specific treatment options before deciding what is best for their child. If they have questions or concerns about the diagnosis or treatment alternatives, they should always feel free to get a second opinion.

Having a child with DMDD can be a challenging experience. Appropriate treatment for your child is important. However, it is also important to make sure you have the information, support and assistance you need.

More information about children with DMDD and other challenging behaviors is available from:

The Balanced Mind Foundation at www.thebalancedmind.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness at www.nami.org

Mental Health America at www.mentalhealthamerica.net

For more information, see Facts for Families:

[#4 The Depressed Child](#)

[#6 The Child Who Can't Pay Attention \(ADHD\)](#)

[#33 Conduct Disorder](#)

[#38 Bipolar Disorder](#)

[#47 The Anxious Child](#)

[#52 Comprehensive Psychiatric Evaluation](#)

[#55 Understanding Violent Behavior in Children and Adolescents](#)

[#72 Oppositional Defiant Disorder](#)

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