



# Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) Fact Sheet

## The Facts

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All children are oppositional from time to time, particularly when tired, hungry, stressed, or upset. They may argue, talk back, disobey, and defy parents, teachers, and other adults. Oppositional behavior is a normal part of development for the two to three year old and early adolescents. However, openly uncooperative and hostile behavior becomes a serious concern when it is so frequent and consistent that it stands out when compared with other children of the same age and developmental level and when it affects the child's social, family, and academic life.

In children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), there is an ongoing pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and hostile behavior toward authority figures that seriously interferes with the child's day to day functioning.<sup>1</sup>

Many children and teens who have ODD also have other disorders, such as:

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Learning disabilities
- Mood disorders (such as depression)
- Anxiety disorders

Some children with ODD go on to develop a more serious behavior condition called conduct disorder.

## The Symptoms

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Symptoms of ODD can be grouped into three categories:

- **Angry/irritable mood:**
  - Loses temper easily
  - Frequent outbursts of anger and resentment
  - Touchy and/or easily annoyed
  - Angry and/or disrespectful
- **Argumentative/defiant behavior:**
  - Excessively argues with adults
  - Actively refuses to comply with requests and rules
  - Blames others for the child's own mistakes
  - Deliberately tries to annoy or upset others, or is easily annoyed by others
- **Vindictiveness**
  - Is spiteful and seeks revenge
  - Says mean and hateful things when angry or upset

In addition, many children with ODD are moody, easily frustrated and have low self-esteem. They also might abuse drugs and alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

## Support & Treatment

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Early treatment can often prevent future problems. Treatment will depend on your child's symptoms, age, and health. It will also depend on how bad the ODD is.

Children with ODD may need to try different therapists and types of therapies before they find what works for them.

Treatment may include:

- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy.** A child learns to better solve problems and communicate. He or she also learns how to control impulses and anger.
- **Family therapy.** This therapy helps make changes in the family. It improves communication skills and family interactions. Having a child with ODD can be very hard for parents. It can also cause problems for siblings. Parents and siblings need support and understanding.
- **Peer group therapy.** A child learns better social skills.
- **Medicines.** These are not often used to treat ODD. But a child may need them for other symptoms or disorders, such as ADHD or anxiety disorders.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> American Academy of child and adolescent Psychiatry 2019. Retrieved from: [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-With-Oppositional-Defiant-disorder-072.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-With-Oppositional-Defiant-disorder-072.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Cleveland Clinic 2020 Retrieved from: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9905-oppositional-defiant-disorder>  
Stanford Children's Health 2020 Retrieved from:

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=oppositional-defiant-disorder-90-P02573>