

Recognizing depression in children

What is depression?

Depression is a mood disorder that affects the way you think and feel. The most common symptom is a feeling of deep sadness. People who are depressed may also:

- Feel hopeless
- Feel that life isn't worth living
- Have thoughts of suicide or death

Depression in children

Children as young as age 6 may feel depressed. But they can't always tell you how they feel. Instead, your child may:

- Eat more or less than normal
- Sleep more or less than usual
- Seem unable to have fun
- Think or speak about suicide or death
- Seem fearful or anxious
- Act in an aggressive way
- Use alcohol or other drugs
- Complain of stomachaches, headaches or other pains that can't be explained
- Have problems at school or home

What can you do?

Children with depression can be helped with treatment. Here are some ways you can help:

- Talk with your child's healthcare provider about medicine and psychotherapy. Both can help.
- Look for mental health resources at your child's school, local mental health center, social service agency or hospital.
- Let your child know that they will not feel this way forever.
- Offer your love and support.
- If your child talks about death or suicide, seek help right away.

