

Understanding childhood mood disorders

Children younger than age 18 can experience one of two types of mood disorders: major depressive disorder (MDD) and bipolar disorder.



Signs and symptoms

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD):

Feelings of sadness, worthlessness and guilt; disinterest in normal activities; changes in sleep patterns and appetite; fatigue; suicidal thoughts/actions; and impaired cognitive functioning. Depressed children typically withdraw from friends, family members and school.

Bipolar Disorder:

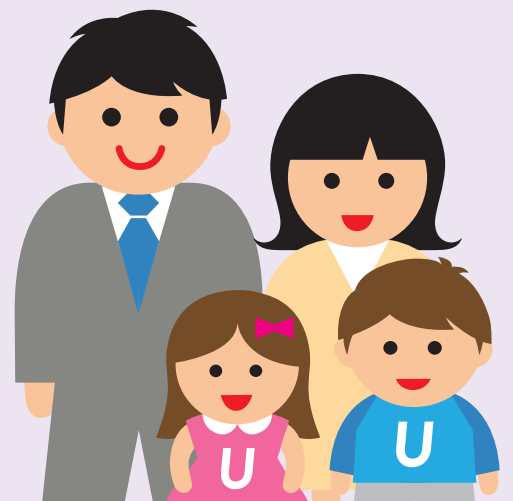
Intense mood changes, swinging between depression and mania; intense irritability or euphoria; grandiose beliefs; excessively social and risky. Bipolar children often sleep as little as three-to-four hours a night.

Approximately **10%** of youth experience depression in their adolescence.

Pediatric bipolar disorder affects an estimated **2%** of children and adolescents.

Parents can help

- Learn the early signs of depression and bipolar disorder — especially if there's a family history of these disorders.
- Ask your child if there's anything he/she wants to talk about.
- Keep consistent communication with your spouse/former spouse.
- If symptoms cause daily impairment in functioning, or you fear for your child's safety, get your child a psychiatric evaluation.



Treatment

For bipolar disorder, the first treatment response is typically mood stabilizers or antipsychotic medications. Children with MDD are usually treated with antidepressants, psychotherapy or both.