

Does my child have a mood disorder?

All children become cranky and irritable at times, but children who suddenly experience intense moodiness that lasts for several days or who seem chronically irritable or angry should be evaluated. Medication and psychosocial therapy can help control symptoms of mood disorders.

Mood disorders can be episodic or chronic

The most common types of episodic mood disorders are depression, marked by a sudden onset of deep sadness lasting for a week or more, and bipolar disorder, which includes distinct episodes of elation or elevated mood that is different from usual.



Signs of depression

- A period of sudden sadness
- Loss of interest in sports, music or other activities
- Unexpected decline in grades
- Talks about hurting him or herself or suddenly starts talking about death or suicide



Signs of mania

- Elevated or elated moods lasting 4-5 days
- Gradually needs less sleep but is still very energized
- Talks fast, has racing thoughts
- Increased interest in sex or preoccupied with grandiose ideas or superpowers

Normal behavior vs. mood disorder

All of these mood disorders need to be distinguished from normal development. It's normal for children who are 10 to 13 years old to be somewhat oppositional or non-compliant with their parents. If a child is surly at the dinner table but otherwise has good grades, healthy friends and engages in healthy activities, then there's no need to worry about a mood disorder.



Mood disorders are **rare** in children

affecting fewer than **4%** between the ages of 8 and 15.

UCLA offers mood disorders programs

UCLA's Child and Adolescent Mood Disorders Program (CHAMP) provides diagnostic evaluations, second-opinion consultations and short-term treatment for youth with mood disorder symptoms and their families.

For more information, visit www.semel.ucla.edu/champ or call (310) 825-2836 for information.

