How parents can help

• Learn the early signs of depression and bipolar disorder—especially if there's a family history of these disorders.

• Communicate: Ask your child if there's anything he/she wants to talk about.

• Keep consistent communication with your spouse/former spouse. Supportive parents can instill resilience in their children.

• If the symptoms cause daily impairment in functioning, or if you fear for your child's safety, get your child a psychiatric evaluation.

Treatment for mood disorders

Treatment of these disorders depends on how severe and impairing the disorder is, as well as the child’s age. For bipolar disorder, the first treatment response is typically mood stabilizers or antipsychotic medications. Children with major depressive disorder are usually treated with antidepressants, psychotherapy or both.