

# Teen Depression



Office of  
Mental Health



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# Teen Depression

## Introduction

You are not alone.

There are ways you can feel better.

If you have been feeling sad, hopeless, or irritable for what seems like a long time, you might have depression.

- Depression is a real, treatable brain illness, or health problem.
- Depression can be caused by big transitions in life, stress, or changes in your body's chemicals that affect your thoughts and moods.
- Even if you feel hopeless, depression gets better with treatment.
- There are lots of people who understand and want to help you.
- Ask for help as early as you can so you can get back to being yourself.

## Regular sadness and depression are not the same

### Regular sadness

Feeling moody, sad, or grouchy? Who doesn't once in a while? It's easy to have a couple of bad days. Your schoolwork, activities, and family and friend drama, all mixed with not enough sleep, can leave you feeling overwhelmed. On top of that, teen hormones can be all over the place and also make you moody or cry about the smallest thing. Regular moodiness and sadness usually go away quickly though, within a couple of days.

## Depression

Untreated depression is a more intense feeling of sadness, hopelessness, and anger or frustration that lasts much longer, such as for weeks, months, or longer. These feelings make it hard for you to function as you normally would or participate in your usual activities. You may also have trouble focusing and feel like you have little to no motivation or energy. You may not even feel like seeing your best friends. Depression can make you feel like it is hard to enjoy life or even get through the day.

## Know the signs and symptoms of depression

**Most of the day or nearly every day you may feel one or all of the following:**

- Sad
- Empty
- Hopeless
- Angry, cranky, or frustrated, even at minor things

**You also may:**

- Not care about things or activities you used to enjoy.
- Have weight loss when you are not dieting or weight gain from eating too much.
- Have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or sleep much more than usual.
- Move or talk more slowly.
- Feel restless or have trouble sitting still.
- Feel very tired or like you have no energy.
- Feel worthless or very guilty.
- Have trouble concentrating, remembering information, or making decisions.
- Think about dying or suicide or try suicide.

Not everyone experiences depression the same way. And depression can occur at the same time as other mental health problems, such as anxiety, an eating disorder, or substance abuse.

# If you think you are depressed, ask for help as early as you can

## 1. Talk to:

- Your parents or guardian
- Your teacher or counselor
- Your doctor
- A helpline, such as 1-800-273-TALK (8255), free 24-hour help. The TTY number is 1-800-799-4TTY (4889).
- Or call 911 if you are in a crisis or want to hurt yourself.

**2. Ask your parent or guardian to make an appointment with your doctor for a checkup.** Your doctor can make sure that you do not have another health problem that is causing your depression. If your doctor finds that you do not have another health problem, he or she can treat your depression or refer you to a mental health professional. A mental health professional can give you a thorough evaluation and also treat your depression.

**3. Talk to a mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist, counselor, psychologist, or other therapist.** These mental health professionals can diagnose and treat depression and other mental health problems.

## There are ways you can feel better

Effective treatments for depression include talk therapy or a combination of talk therapy and medicine.

### Talk therapy

A therapist, such as a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a social worker, or counselor can help you understand and manage your moods and feelings. You can talk out your emotions to someone who understands and supports you. You can also learn how to stop thinking negatively and start to look at the positives in life. This will help you build confidence and feel better about yourself. Research has shown that certain types of talk therapy or psychotherapy can help teens deal with depression. These include cognitive behavioral therapy, which focuses on thoughts, behaviors, and feelings related to depression, and interpersonal psychotherapy, which focuses on working on relationships.

## Medication

If your doctor thinks you need medicine to help your depression, he or she can prescribe an antidepressant. There are a few antidepressants that have been widely studied and proven to help teens. If your doctor recommends medicine, it is important to see your doctor regularly and tell your parents or guardian about your feelings, especially if you start feeling worse or have thoughts of hurting yourself.

## Be good to yourself

Besides seeing a doctor and a counselor, you can also help your depression by being patient with yourself and good to yourself. Don't expect to get better immediately, but you will feel yourself improving gradually over time.

- Daily exercise, getting enough sleep, spending time outside in nature and in the sun, or eating healthy foods can also help you feel better.
- Your counselor may teach you how to be aware of your feelings and teach you relaxation techniques. Use these when you start feeling down or upset.
- Try to spend time with supportive family members. Talking with your parents, guardian, or other family members who listen and care about you gives you support and they can make you laugh.
- Try to get out with friends and try fun things that help you express yourself.

## Depression can affect relationships

It's understandable that you don't want to tell other people that you have been struggling with depression. But know that depression can affect your relationships with family and friends, and how you perform at school. Maybe your grades have dropped because you find it hard to concentrate and stay on top of school. Teachers may think that you aren't trying in class. Maybe because you're feeling hopeless, peers think you are too negative and start giving you a hard time.

Know that their misunderstanding won't last forever because you are getting better with treatment. Think about talking with people you trust to help them understand what you are going through.



## **Depression is not your fault or caused by something you did wrong**

Depression is a real, treatable brain illness, or health problem. Depression can be caused by big transitions in life, stress, or changes in your body's chemicals that affect your thoughts and moods. Depression can run in families. Maybe you haven't realized that you have depression and have been blaming yourself for being negative. **Remember that depression is not your fault!**

## **Finding Help**

### **New York State Mental Health Program Directory**

The Mental Health Program Directory provides information on all programs in New York State that are operated, licensed or funded by the State Office of Mental Health (OMH). This site includes three search options: Basic Search, Advanced Search, and Full Directory. Definitions for all programs are available under the Support tab, along with directory help and information on program data collection. Find services close to you at <https://my.omh.ny.gov/bi/pd/saw.dll?PortalPages#report>.

### **Mental Health Treatment Program Locator**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides this online resource for locating mental health treatment facilities and programs. The Mental Health Treatment Locator section of the Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator lists facilities providing mental health services to persons with mental illness. Find a facility in your state at <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>.

## **Learn more**

### **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

### **NIDA for Teens, Drugs & Health**

<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog>

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

1-800-273-TALK (8255), free 24-hour help.

The service is available to anyone. All calls are confidential.

The TTY number is: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

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For questions or complaints regarding mental health services anywhere in New York State please contact:

New York State  
Office of Mental Health  
Customer Relations  
44 Holland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12229  
(800) 597-8481 (toll-free)

For information about mental health services in your community, contact the New York State Office of Mental Health regional office nearest you:

Western New York Field Office  
737 Delaware Avenue, Suite 200  
Buffalo, NY 14209  
(716) 885-4219

Central New York Field Office  
545 Cedar Street, 2nd Floor  
Syracuse, NY 13210-2319  
(315) 426-3930

Hudson River Field Office  
10 Ross Circle, Suite 5N  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601  
(845) 454-8229

Long Island Field Office  
998 Crooked Hill Road  
Building #45-3  
West Brentwood, NY 11717-1087  
(631) 761-2886

New York City Field Office  
330 Fifth Avenue, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10001-3101  
(212) 330-1650



Office of  
Mental Health

**In Crisis?**  
We've got time to listen.  
**Text Got5 to 741741**

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**National Suicide  
Prevention Lifeline**  
**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

Available 24 hours a day,  
7 days a week (toll-free).

The service is available to anyone.  
All calls are confidential.

The TTY number is:  
**1-800-799-4TTY (4889)**

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