

# DEPRESSION FACT SHEET

## Background

Not only adults become depressed. Children and teenagers may also have depression. The good news is that depression is a treatable illness.

Depression is defined as an illness when the feelings of depression persist and interfere with a child or adolescent's ability to function. About 5 percent of children and adolescents in the general population suffer from depression at any given point in time. Children under stress, who experience loss, or who have attentional, learning, conduct or anxiety disorders are at a higher risk for depression. Depression also tends to run in families.

The behavior of depressed children and teenagers may differ from those expressed by adults. A child who used to play often may now spend most of the time alone. Things that were once fun now bring little joy to the depressed child. Children and adolescents who are depressed may say they want to be dead or may talk about suicide. Children who cause trouble at home or school may also be suffering from depression. Because the child may not always seem sad, parents and teachers may not realize that the behaviors are connected to depression. When asked, these children can sometimes state that they are unhappy or sad.

## Treatment

Early diagnosis and treatment are essential for depressed children. Depression is a real illness that requires professional help.

Comprehensive treatment often includes both individual and family therapy. For example, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) are forms of therapy shown to be effective in treating depression.

Treatment may also include the use of antidepressant medication. For help, parents should ask their child's doctor to refer them to a qualified mental health professional, who can diagnose and treat depression in children and teenagers.

## Symptoms of depression can include:

- Frequent sadness, tearfulness, crying
- Decreased interest in activities; or inability to enjoy previously favorite activity
- Hopelessness
- Persistent boredom; low energy
- Social isolation, poor communication
- Low self esteem and guilt
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Increased irritability, anger, or hostility
- Difficulty with relationships
- Frequent complaints of physical illnesses such as headaches and stomachaches
- Poor concentration
- A major change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Thoughts or expression of suicide or self-harm
- Talk of or efforts to run away from home

