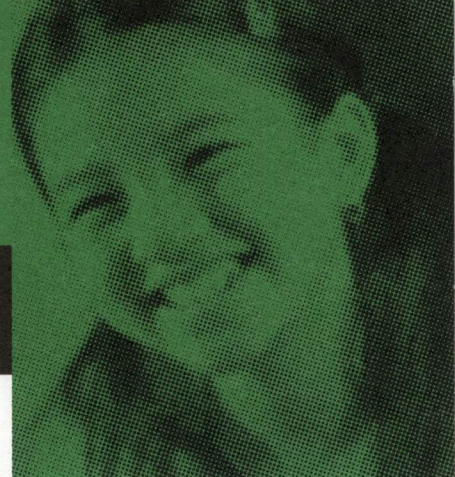


# tool kit for teen care

## Depression in Adolescents



### What is depression?

- Depression is a feeling of sadness, helplessness, and hopelessness that lingers over time. It can lead to school failure, alcohol and other drug abuse, and even suicide.

### Who is depressed?

- Depression is more common among females than males. However, it occurs in people of all ages, races, income levels, and educational levels.
- Depression occurs as often in adolescents as it does in adults. One in eight adolescents are estimated to be depressed.
- Adolescent girls are two to three times more likely than adolescent boys to be depressed.
- Nearly two thirds of teens with clinical depression go unnoticed so they do not get treated. This may be due to the following factors:
  - Adolescents depend a lot on others, usually adults, to notice their problems.
  - Adults expect teens to act moody and often do not understand the difference between moodiness and depression.
  - Parents of depressed teens often are depressed themselves.
  - Teens might not understand or describe their feelings as clearly as adults.
  - Physicians often do not ask the right questions during a routine visit.

### Who is at risk for depression?

- Teens with one or more depressed parents are more likely to develop depression.
- A young person who has experienced major depression is at an increased risk for becoming depressed again within 5 years.
- Those who were physically abused or psychologically maltreated during childhood are at an increased risk for depression.

### What are the symptoms of depression?

- People who are depressed have five or more of the following symptoms (including at least one of the first two) nearly every day, all day, for at least 2 weeks:
  - Lack of interest in things that they used to like
  - Feeling sad, blue, “down in the dumps,” or irritable
  - Having a change in appetite, or weight loss or gain
  - Having thoughts of death or suicide, or trying to commit suicide
  - Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
  - Slowing down, or acting restless and not being able to sit still
  - Having problems concentrating, thinking, remembering or making decisions
  - Sleeping too much, or not being able to fall asleep or to stay asleep
  - Lacking energy and feeling tired all of the time
- Other symptoms of depression in adolescents can include:
  - Frequent headaches, stomach aches, and other physical complaints
  - Missing school frequently
  - Poor grades in school
  - Taking big risks, such as driving too fast (this can mean the teen is suicidal)
  - Using alcohol or other drugs, or becoming sexually active in an attempt to avoid feelings of depression
- Depression is frequently associated with other mental disorders, such as dysthymia (chronic depressed mood lasting for at least 1 year), an anxiety disorder, a disruptive or antisocial disorder, or a substance abuse disorder.

### How is depression diagnosed and treated?

- Depression is diagnosed by a doctor who evaluates the teen's physical and mental condition.
- Treatment can include medication, counseling, or both. The teen must work with his or her doctor to find the best treatment.
- The doctor may refer the teen to a specialist for treatment.
- Recognizing and treating problems early in childhood is very important to prevent the depression from becoming established and difficult to treat.







## tool kit for teen care

### Does depression lead to suicide?

- Sometimes teens feel so depressed that they think about suicide.
- Most depressed people do not commit or attempt suicide, but depression increases the risk for suicide and suicide attempts.
- It is important to know the warning signs of suicide, such as:
  - Suicide threats, direct and indirect
  - Obsession with death
  - Dramatic change in personality or appearance
  - Irrational, weird behavior
  - Overwhelming sense of guilt, shame, or rejection
  - Giving away belongings
- If anyone is showing these signs, a mental health expert should be contacted immediately.

### For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**  
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20016-3007  
Telephone: (202) 966-7300  
Fax: (202) 966-2891  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

**American Academy of Pediatrics**  
141 Northwest Point Boulevard  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098  
Telephone: (847) 228-5005  
Fax: (847) 228-5097  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

**American Association of Suicidology**  
4201 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 310  
Washington, DC 20008  
Telephone: (202) 202-237-2280  
Fax: (202) 202-237-2282  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

**American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**  
409 12th Street SW  
PO Box 96920  
Washington, DC 20090-6290  
Telephone: (202) 863-2497  
Fax: (202) 484-3917  
[www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)

**American Psychological Association**  
750 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
Telephone: (202) 336-5500 or 800-374-2721  
[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

**AWARE Foundation**  
1015 Chestnut Street, Suite 1225  
Philadelphia, PA 19107-4302  
Telephone: (215) 955-9847  
[www.awarefoundation.org](http://www.awarefoundation.org)

**National Alliance for the Mentally Ill**  
Colonial Place Three  
2107 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201-3042  
Telephone: (703) 524-7600 or 800-950-NAMI  
Fax: (703) 524-9094  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

**National Depressive & Manic-Depressive Association**  
730 North Franklin Street, Suite 501  
Chicago, IL 60610  
Telephone: (312) 642-0049 or 800-826-3632  
Fax: (312) 642-7243  
[www.ndmda.org](http://www.ndmda.org)

**National Mental Health Association**  
1021 Prince Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Telephone: (703) 684-7722 or 800-969-NMHA  
Fax: (703) 684-5968  
[www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
Center for Mental Health Services  
5600 Fishers Lane, Room 17-99  
Rockville, MD 20857  
Telephone: (301) 443-0001  
Fax: (301) 443-1563  
[www.samhsa.gov/centers/cmhs/cmhs.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/centers/cmhs/cmhs.html)

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
National Institute of Mental Health  
6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 8184, MSC 9663  
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663  
Telephone: (301) 443-4513  
Fax: (301) 443-4279  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)