

What Parents Need to Know About Teen Depression

The teenage years are full of emotional and physical changes that can create very challenging times for parents and their teenagers. These developmental changes can create a roller coaster ride of good and bad days for teens. Most teenagers manage to get through the ups and downs that occur during this time without the need for professional help. Teenagers, like adults, will have days when they feel down or sad. What is difficult for parents is determining when your teen's bad days are something to be concerned about. Although adults have the ability to access help, teens generally rely on their peers. Therefore, it is important as a parent to be informed about the signs and symptoms of teen depression and what to do.

Recognizing signs of teen depression may be difficult because the changes in mood and the behavior exhibited from depression may not be what you would expect. Also, it can be difficult for a teenager to identify and express what they are feeling. Below is a list of symptoms which may indicate depression, particularly when the symptoms last for more than two weeks:

- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Isolation and withdrawal from friends and family
- Frequent crying or sadness
- Changes in normal eating and sleeping patterns
- Lack of energy
- Feelings of emptiness and unimportance
- Thoughts of ending their life, or thoughts about death

Differences in TEEN depression:

- Angry, annoyed, or easily irritated
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Overly sensitivity to criticism
- Withdrawal from most people except one or two friends

Teens living with untreated depression experience a variety of problems throughout their life. They may begin having problems at school, using and abusing substances, developing eating disorders, or running away from home. In the more severe cases of untreated depression, suicide attempts and death can occur. As a parent, it is reassuring to know that teen depression is treatable, and positive results can occur with the appropriate help. If you feel your child is in imminent danger from depression and thoughts of death or suicide, you should take your teen to the nearest emergency room or call 911.