

Depression in Children & Teens

What is Depression?

We all experience times in our lives when we feel sad or unhappy. That is part of experiencing ups and downs throughout life and a natural response in certain situations. But when these feelings grow so strong that they feel unmanageable and/or last for long periods of time, the person experiencing them might be struggling with depression.

This can become a serious condition that interferes with a person's ability to live their day-to-day life and may require professional treatment and/or medication to stabilize and manage the symptoms.

Types of Depression Disorders

The most common types of depression that we diagnosis and treat in the children and teens we serve include:

- Major Depressive Disorder
- Persistent Depressive Disorder
- Bipolar Depression
- Seasonal Affective Disorder
- Atypical Depression

Signs & Symptoms

It can be difficult for a child to understand and explain what they are feeling so it's very important for caregivers to pay close attention to behaviors. Below is a list of behaviors that may indicate a child or teen is struggling with depression.

- Talking about feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Changes in eating habits (such as eating a lot more or a lot less)
- Changes in sleeping habits (such as sleeping more, insomnia or frequent bad dreams)
- Difficulties concentrating, forgetfulness
- Complaints of stomach or body aches that aren't due to a physical problem
- Increased anxiousness, sadness, irritability, anger or aggression
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Avoiding activities enjoyed in the past
- Crying a lot more than usual
- Returning to outgrown behaviors (such as thumb-sucking or bedwetting)
- Poor school performance, avoiding schoolwork or skipping school or other activities

If you're noticing any of these behaviors in a child, help them complete this free, downloadable mental health assessment at <https://info.kvc.org/quick-assessment>



Our Locations

KANSAS CITY

4300 Brenner Dr.
Kansas City, KS 66104

WICHITA

1507 W. 21st St. N.
Wichita, KS 67203

HAYS

205 E 7th St.
Hays, KS 67601

What You Can Do to Help

If you know a child who is struggling with depression, here are some ways you can support them:

- **Seek professional help.** It's important to have a physician or licensed mental health professional examine the child for an accurate assessment and diagnosis of their physical and mental health.
- **If the child expresses thoughts of suicide, call 911 immediately.** Take these symptoms very seriously and get them professional help as soon as possible.
- **Speak to their teachers and school counselors** to ensure they know that the child may need additional support at school.
- **Encourage the child to exercise or do physical activities they enjoy.** Regular exercise can help with depression and promote better sleep.
- **Be observant of their behaviors and help them keep track of when feelings of depression occur.** Tracking this over time can help identify triggers, what treatment approaches are most effective or any additional concerns.
- **Create a safe space where they feel they can openly share.** Encourage frequent, honest conversations. Ask them how they're feeling and allow them the time and space to open up as they're ready. Just letting them know you are there for them to have a judgment-free conversation will build trust.

Contact KVC Hospitals for Support

KVC Hospitals is a network of nonprofit children's psychiatric hospitals and residential treatment centers serving youth ages 6 to 18. Each year, we give thousands of youth a safe place to heal, build resilience, and overcome struggles with behavioral and mental health challenges. Our compassionate team of psychiatric, medical and behavioral health professionals provides a nurturing and therapeutic experience along with a treatment plan tailored to meet each child's individual needs. The goal of our treatment programs is for each child to safely return home with the resources and supports in place to live a healthy and happy life in their community.

If you're concerned that a child in your care is struggling with depression or other mental health needs, **call KVC Hospitals at 913-890-7468.**

We're available 24/7 to answer your questions.

Here's a list of additional resources you can contact for help:

- Call the child's primary care physician or your local community mental health center
- Text HOME to 741741 for 24/7 support from the Crisis Text Line
- Call the National Alliance on Mental Illness helpline at 800-950-6264, which is staffed by volunteers who have mental health conditions
- Call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255