

# Children's Mental Health Disorders

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- About 1 in 5 American children suffer from a diagnosable [mental illness](#) during a given year. Nearly 5 million American children and adolescents suffer from a serious mental illness (one that significantly interferes with their day-to-day life).<sup>1</sup>
- Some of the major mental illnesses and behavioral disorders that affect children are:
  - **Anxiety disorders** - Children have fears that adults often don't understand, but when they persist or when they begin to interfere with a child's normal daily routine, he or she may have a diagnosable and treatable anxiety disorder.
  - **Depression** - Studies of children aged six to 12 have shown that as many as one in 10 suffer from the illness of depression. These children cannot escape their feelings of sadness for long periods of time.
  - **Attention-Deficit Disorders (ADD)** – This condition affects a child's ability to concentrate, to learn and to maintain a normal level of activity. Attention-deficit disorder affects from three to 10 percent of all children in America. Thought to be 10 times more common in boys than in girls, this disorder often develops before the age of seven but is most often diagnosed when the child is between ages eight and 10.
  - **Bipolar** - This illness involves persistent feelings of sadness and/or rapidly changing moods. Feelings of extreme well-being that is out of the ordinary or thoughts about suicide may be present.
  - **Schizophrenia:** This disorder involves distorted perceptions and thoughts. Children may have delusions and/or hallucinations and may hear voices or see things that are not there.
- Remember, all mental illnesses and behavioral disorders are treatable. In general, the earlier the diagnosis and treatment, the less severe the disease or disorder becomes.
- If you see symptoms that concern you contact your doctor.
- Along with treatment of a diagnosed mental illness or behavioral disorder, it is important to gain knowledge about your child's particular condition.
- Stigma strikes those affected by mental illness in almost all areas of life. Work to eliminate stigma every chance you can by sharing the fact that all mental illnesses are no-fault diseases.

If you are a parent, friend or professional concerned about a child or teen who may show signs of a mental illness or serious behavior disorder and need support, call the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health or your local chapter. You may also reach us online at [www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org) for information and resources in your state.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Surgeon General