

# Depressive and Bipolar Disorders in Children and Young People

## What is it?

A depressive disorder is when a person has low mood, less interest or enjoyment in activities and other symptoms that have lasted for at least two weeks. In children, they may become more irritable and have temper outbursts (referred to as disruptive mood dysregulation disorder) which can be confused for a paediatric bipolar disorder presentation.

A bipolar disorder is when a person has a manic or hypomanic episode. Mania or hypomania includes the person feeling very happy and positive (more than a normal level) or irritable, and being lots more active and energetic for at least a week. They may also have a depressive episode.

### Depressive Disorders

#### Disruptive Emotional Dysregulation Disorder

Severe verbal and behavioural temper outbursts happening for at least 12 months.

#### Major Depressive Episode

Low mood (or irritability) and/or not wanting to go out or enjoying it when they do. This lasts for at least two weeks.

#### Persistent Depressive Episode (Dysthymia)

Low mood most of the day for more than one year.

#### Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder

Changes in mood, irritability and other symptoms in the week before a period starts and getting better a few days after the period begins.

### Bipolar Disorders

#### Bipolar I Disorder

Presence of manic episode (7+ days) with or without hypomanic or major depressive episodes.

#### Bipolar II Disorder

The person has hypomanic episodes (which last for four or more days) and has or has had major depressive episodes.

#### Cyclothymic Disorder

Chronic up and down moods for at least a year in children that may or may not be severe enough to be classed as a depressive or hypomanic episode.

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP may refer your child for treatment. Mild to moderate depressive disorders can be treated effectively with early intervention. A referral does not mean that your child is seriously mentally unwell. If it is possible that your child may be diagnosed with bipolar, your GP may refer you to a specialist for an assessment and treatment.

Your GP may also:

- Refer you to a counselling service so your child can learn how to manage the depression
- Refer you to a family service to provide family support
- Refer you to a specialist service if the depression is severe or if your child might need medication



## What questions could I ask my doctor?

There's a lot going through your mind, and it can be easy to forget the questions you want to ask your GP. Here's a list of questions you may wish to ask:

- What can I do to help my child now?
- What can I do to help my child over time?
- When should I make another appointment?
- How quickly can I expect results?
- What happens if my child gets worse?



Your GP will want your child to come back so they can check how they are improving. If they are not improving, your GP may discuss other options to assist.

It is important to support your child in learning how to manage their mood. Treatment can often take time.

Some of the things that you can do include:

- Getting treatment early as it helps prevent any depressive disorders getting worse.
- Provide reassurance and support to your child.
- Follow through with any referrals made by your GP, including counselling.
- Look after yourself – you are the child's main support and it is easy to forget to maintain good self-care.

## What supports are available?

### Public health and other free services

The **Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service** (ICAMHS) provides specialist treatment for children and young people up to 18 years of age. **Talk to your GP about this service.**

The **Primary and Community Health Psychology Service** provides free psychological assessment and treatment for children up to 12 years. Contact **8788 4200** and ask to speak to the psychology intake worker.

The **SWSLHD Youth Health Service** provides free counselling to youth aged 12-21 years. Contact one of their centres and ask to speak to their intake worker:

- **The Corner Youth Health Service** (Bankstown) . . . . . phone 9726 8633
- **The Fairfield Liverpool Youth Health Team** (FLYHT) . . . . . phone 8717 1717
- **Traxside** (Campbelltown) . . . . . phone 4625 2525

**Headspace** provides bulk-billed counselling services for young people aged 12-25. Contact one of their centres to make an appointment:

- Bankstown . . . . . phone 9393 9669
- Liverpool . . . . . phone 8785 3200
- Macarthur . . . . . phone 4627 9089

**South Western Sydney PHN Mental Health Services** provide two services to improve access to mental health services for children and young people:

- **Star4kids** is for children aged 3-12 years
- **You In Mind** is for young people over the age of 12 years

Both services include criteria to be met and a GP referral. **Speak to your GP about this service and whether a referral would be beneficial.**

The **Raising Healthy Minds App** is a free app you can tailor to your child, family and interests. It answers your questions about child wellbeing and shares practical tips for your day-to-day family life.

### Private options

There are many private specialist and allied health providers that can treat child anxiety. Speak to your GP about rebates for treatment.

## Where can I learn more?

**Bullying No Way** - for children and parents: [bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://bullyingnoway.gov.au)

**Kids Help Line:** [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

**Raising Children Network:** [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)

**SWS Local Health District:**

- **Mental Health Services in Bankstown**
- **Mental Health Services in Liverpool and Fairfield**
- **Mental Health Services in Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly**
- **Mental Health Services in the Southern Highlands**

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs