

Behavioural Disorders in Children and Young People

What is it?

A behavioural disorder is when a child has difficulty with their emotions and behaviours. Their behaviour can be negative towards others, not follow expected rules or they may not do as asked or expected.

To be diagnosed, the behaviour has to be severe enough that it affecting the child's ability to function (such as physically, socially, academically, etc.)

Types of behavioural disorders

- **Oppositional Defiant Disorder:** A pattern of angry or irritable mood with the child arguing and being defiant or vindictive for at least 6 months
- **Intermittent Explosive Disorder:** Repeated behavioural outbursts that are impulsive out of proportion to the event and the child finds it hard to control their aggression
- **Conduct Disorder:** Repeated negative behaviour which is against the expected rules for their age and continues even with consequences in place
- **Pyromania:** Fascination and attraction to fires and repeatedly and deliberately lighting fires for their enjoyment
- **Kleptomania:** Repeatedly steals because the stealing give the child a sense of pleasure once they have stolen

What will my GP do?

Your GP may refer your child for treatment. Mild to moderate behavioural disorders in children can be treated effectively with early intervention and child behaviour strategies. A referral does not mean that your child is seriously mentally unwell.

Your GP may also:

- Refer you to a parenting program to learn new strategies to manage their behaviour
- Refer to a specialist service if the behavioural disorder is severe or if your child might need medication

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.

What can I do?

It is important to support your child in learning how to manage their emotions and behaviour. Treatment can often take time. Some of the things that you can do include:

- Getting treatment early as it helps prevent the behaviour getting worse
- Spend quality time with your child to strengthen the relationship
- Try not to get frustrated when your child is being reactive or not behaving like you want them to. It may make the situation worse
- Look after yourself – you are the child's main support and it is easy to forget to maintain good self-care

What questions could I ask my doctor?

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



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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. Phone 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 [9796 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
- [Campbelltown](#): 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 and [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 behavioural disorders. Speak to your GP about rebates for treatment.

Where can I learn more?

- **Bullying No Way** – Support and advice for children and parents: bullyingnoway.gov.au
- **Kids Help Line**: kidshelpline.com.au
- **Raising Children Network**: raisingchildren.net.au

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

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