



Depression in children

Information for anyone who lives and/or works with children and young people

What is Depression?

Feeling sad or fed up is a normal reaction to experiences that are difficult or stressful. Sometimes these feelings of sadness can go on for some time and can start to interfere with everyday life. At these times the low moods become part of an illness we call Depression. Anybody can have depression and it happens in people of all ages, races, income levels and education levels.

What are the Symptoms of Depression?

A child or young person with depression can have major problems in not only how they feel, but also how they behave. This may cause difficulties at home, at school, as well as with relationships with family and friends. When a child or young person is depressed many changes can be seen. They may:

- Lose interest in activities that they enjoyed before
- Lose their appetite or start overeating
- Have problems with concentration, remembering things or making decisions.
- Self harm-or have thoughts of suicide
- Have disturbed sleep or sleep far too much
- Feel tired all the time, exhausted
- Complain of aches and pains, for example headaches or tummy pains
- Have little self-confidence
- Express feelings of guilt for no reason

In children, especially teenagers, being irritable and grumpy all the time can also be a symptom of depression, not just of being in a 'bad mood'. **The longer the illness continues without understanding, help or treatment, the more harmful it is likely to be to the life of the young person and to their family.**

How can I help?

Recognising and understanding your child's illness is a huge step in knowing how you can help. When your child becomes irritable or even does something risky, it is common for you to feel angry or upset. It is important that you try to remain calm and be honest about letting the child know what you feel and seek help. Some children may be reluctant to talk to you about their difficulties, although they might talk to someone at school, a friend or their GP, or a professional for young people's mental health. It is important to encourage them to talk to someone they can trust, as well as seeking professional help. Having little chats, spending time with the young person watching TV, cooking and doing physical activities such as walking can help to lift their mood, even if they say they do not want to do it. A healthy diet and physical exercise can help improve their mood. If you suspect that a young person is depressed, seeking medical advice early on is very important. As a first step, you should contact your GP. If necessary, they can then make a referral for your local child mental health services.

How is Depression treated?

The goal of treatment is to improve the symptoms, prevent the illness from returning and help the young people lead a normal life. Families play an important role in recognising the illness, supporting the young person through treatment and also preventing the illness from coming back. It is therefore very important that you understand the condition. Depending on how depression is affecting your child and how severe it is, they may need different treatments. When they have severe symptoms or have difficulties such as serious suicidal thoughts or risky behaviours, they may need medication and sometimes admission to hospital. Psychological therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) may be tried before considering other possibilities such as medication. This will depend on the individual's illness and their personal circumstances.

Contact Us!

01642 505580



info@redcarlink.com



www.redcarlink.com

The Royal College of Psychiatrists. (2013). Mental Health and Growing Up: Factsheets for Parents, Teachers and Young People (4th ed.). Cambridge: Royal College of Psychiatrists.



@thelinkredcar



@TheLink_Redcar



@The.LINK.CIC



The Link (Redcar) CIC