



Signs and symptoms of depression in teenagers



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As our teenage years can be some of the most mentally and emotionally challenging of our lives, it is important for any signs and symptoms of depression in teenagers to be taken seriously. There are many treatments and therapies available, but many teens find it difficult to seek help.

Our **Guide on Teenage Depression** outlines what the mental health condition can feel like for teenagers, the signs and symptoms of depression to look out for and the steps you can take to support a child - [click here to download](#)

Teenage depression signs and symptoms

Dr **Harley Van Zwanenberg** (MBBS, MRCPsych, MMedSci) clinical director of **Priory's Wellbeing Clinics**, and medical director of **Priory's Woodbourne Hospital** explains how the signs and symptoms of depression in teens can vary between the environments of home and school.

She says: "Both at home and in school I would be looking for changes in normal behaviour, particularly with their friends. Lots of teenagers become stropky with their parents and like to spend time in their rooms but if they are also isolating themselves from friends and changing in the way they respond to friends, that is concerning."

Listed below are some of the **signs and symptoms** of depression in teenagers that may become apparent at home and in places of education:

Teenage depression signs and symptoms at home

- An increase in irritability/hostile/angry outbursts
- Low mood most of the time
- Sleeping excessively or struggling to sleep
- Loss of motivation for activities they used to enjoy – e.g. no longer indulging social events with their friends
- Not wanting to have discussions about their future
- Feeling very negative about themselves and appearing sensitive to comments that people make, perceiving them as negative and personal
- Appetite may reduce or they may comfort eat
- Taking less pride in appearance
- Suicidal or self-harm thoughts

Teenage depression signs and symptoms in school

- A change in their choice of how they spend their free time; they may spend more time on their own or be less interactive with their normal friendship group
- A decrease in concentration at school and perhaps a deterioration in academic performance or effort
- Not wishing to discuss exams/university applications and becoming distressed when this occurs
- Walking out of lessons when this is unusual for them
- Dropping out of extra-curricular activities/teams which they used to enjoy

Advice for parents concerned their teen is suffering from depression

When speaking to a teenager who has signs and symptoms of depression, Dr van Zwanenberg suggests that parents should calmly explain that they are worried as they have seen changes in the teen's behaviour.

Parents should also offer to spend quality time together doing something the young person would normally enjoy as this may facilitate further discussion when engaging in an activity.

If you are worried about the young person being at risk of harming themselves, explain to them that you want to support them in a way they feel comfortable with. Think what you can put in place to give them things to look forward to.

It is worth discussing a risk communication system with them, perhaps a traffic light system; asking them if they can, either verbally or through text, signify a colour that represents their risk morning and evening.

If they are red, what would that mean? How would they like you to react? It might be that they want you to sit with them and not leave them alone until they are amber.

Amber might mean they are feeling low but not at risk of harming themselves, while green might be they are having a good day and they should be allowed out with their friends on their own.

Advice for teachers with a depressed teen in their classroom

While there will be certain activities in which to engage with a depressed teen that are exclusive to home life, there are still methods of communicating with them as a teacher which can enable their time at school to be as comfortable and stress-free as possible.

Dr van Zwanenberg details how it can help to interact with the teenager away from their peers to avoid making them feel uncomfortable if they aren't yet ready to explain their depression with friends. It is important to clarify confidentiality early on and how this can limit who you can express concerns of depression for the teen with.

Explain to them the sources of support in and outside of school for young people low in mood. Offer them contact details for Samaritans and Childline, explaining to them they offer confidential support 24/7 and they can be accessed via online chat or the telephone.

Treatment available for teenagers suffering from depression

The most important thing to get across to teenagers is that depression is treatable. However, it is a serious mental illness and it can be dangerous without treatment and support. Therefore plans have to be put in place to help young people stay safe while accessing treatment.

Treatment available at Priory includes Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), an evidence-based therapy for young people with depression. This is a talking therapy that looks at how thoughts, mood, behaviours and physical health are all linked. It teaches young people skills to change unhelpful patterns in their thinking and behaviours which can lead to improvements in their mood.

A proportion of young people also benefit from antidepressants alongside CBT. These are prescribed by specialist child and adolescent psychiatrists and have a good evidence base when prescribed correctly.

Get in Touch Today

For details of how Priory can provide you with assistance regarding young people's mental health and wellbeing, please call **0800 086 1131** or [click here to submit an enquiry form](#). For professionals looking to make a referral, [please click here](#)

Tags: Depression, Mental Health Treatment, Child And Adolescent Mental Health

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