



Info Sheet: Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

What is ODD?

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is one of the commonly diagnosed disruptive behavior disorders of a group of behavioral problems in children and adolescents. While challenging behaviors are the hallmark of all of these disorders, ODD is specifically characterized by frequent episodes of anger, deliberately irritating or hostile behavior and a pronounced intolerance for authority.

The term “oppositional” literally means actions that are in opposition to rules and norms for socially acceptable behavior. Children with ODD typically have a persistent pattern of irritable, angry outbursts, arguments and disobedience. While this behavior is usually directed at authority figures like parents and teachers, it can also target siblings, classmates and other children.

ODD is a relatively common problem, and with the right care, it can be treated with a great degree of success. The key to successfully “nipping problem behaviors in the bud” is stopping the sequence of events that leads to these behaviors as early as possible. If the pattern of behavior is detected, halted and treated, the problem behaviors are likely to decrease.

Signs and Symptoms

Children with ODD usually begin showing symptoms around 6 to 8, although the disorder can emerge in younger children, too. Symptoms can last throughout the teen years. Your child may be diagnosed with ODD if these symptoms are persistent and continue for at least six months.

Warning signs of ODD to look out for include:

- frequent temper tantrums
- excessive arguments with adults
- refusing to comply with adult requests
- always questioning rules

- refusing to follow rules
- behavior intended to annoy or upset others
- blaming others for misbehavior or mistakes
- becoming easily annoyed with others
- frequently demonstrating an angry attitude
- speaking harshly or unkindly to others

How can I distinguish signs of ODD from the typical “challenging” behavior all children sometimes display?

Determining whether your child might have ODD can be difficult, since most children will exhibit some of the symptoms every now and then (especially when they're tired, hungry or upset).

A child with oppositional defiant disorder, however, will:

- display these symptoms much more often than other children
- consistently demonstrate behavioral issues for a period of at least six months
- often have problems with school and friendships as a direct result of the behavior
- have their overall functioning appreciably compromised by their challenging behaviors

Source: <http://www.childrenshospital.org/az/Site1385/mainpageS1385P0.html>

Tips for Handling an ODD Child:

If your child suffers from Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

- Recognize and praise your child's positive behaviors. Be as specific as possible, such as, "I really liked the way you helped pick up your toys tonight."
- Model the behavior you want your child to have.
- Pick your battles. Avoid power struggles. Almost everything can turn into a power struggle — if you let it.
- Set limits and enforce consistent reasonable consequences.
- Set up a routine. Develop a consistent daily schedule for your child. Asking your child to help develop that routine may be beneficial.
- Build in time together. Develop a consistent weekly schedule that involves you and your child spending time together.

- Work with your partner or others in your household to ensure consistent and appropriate discipline procedures.
- Assign your child a household chore that's essential and that won't get done unless the child does it. Initially, it's important to set your child up for success with tasks that are relatively easy to achieve and gradually blend in more important and challenging expectations. Give clear, easy-to-follow instructions.
- Expect that you'll have setbacks and relapses, and be prepared with a plan to manage those times. In fact, behavior can temporarily worsen when new limits and expectations are set. However, with perseverance and consistency, the initial hard work often pays off with improved behavior and relationships.

Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/oppositional-defiantdisorder/DS00630/DSECTION=lifestyle-and-home-remedies>

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