

## OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is a type of behavior disorder. It is mostly diagnosed in childhood. Children with ODD are uncooperative, defiant, and hostile toward peers, caregivers, teachers, and other authority figures. They are more troubling to others than they are to themselves.

### What causes ODD in a child?

Experts do not know what causes ODD. But there are 2 main theories for why it occurs:

- **Developmental theory.** This theory suggests that the problems start when children are toddlers. Children and teens with ODD may have had trouble learning to become independent from a caregiver or other main person to whom they were emotionally attached. Their behaviors may be normal developmental issues that are lasting beyond the toddler years.
- **Learning theory.** This theory suggests that the negative symptoms of ODD are learned attitudes. They mirror the effects of negative reinforcement methods used by caregivers and others in power. The use of negative reinforcement increases the child's ODD behaviors. That is because these behaviors allow the child to get what they want: attention and reaction from caregivers or others.

### Which children are at risk for ODD?

ODD is more common in boys than in girls. Children with other mental health problems are also more likely to have ODD:

### What are the symptoms of ODD in a child?

- Having frequent temper tantrums
- Arguing a lot with adults
- Refusing to do what an adult asks
- Always questioning rules and refusing to follow rules
- Doing things to annoy or upset others, including adults
- Blaming others for the child's own misbehaviors or mistakes
- Being easily annoyed by others
- Often having an angry attitude
- Speaking harshly or unkindly
- Seeking revenge or being vindictive

## How is ODD diagnosed?

If you see symptoms of ODD in your child or teen, get a diagnosis right away. Early treatment can often prevent future problems.

Before a mental health referral is made, your child's healthcare provider will want to rule out any other health problems. Once this is done, a child psychiatrist or qualified mental health expert can diagnose ODD. He or she will talk with you and your child's teachers about your child's behavior. They may also watch your child. In some cases, your child may need mental health testing.

## How is ODD treated in a child?

Early treatment can often prevent future problems. Treatment will depend on your child's symptoms, age, and health. It will also depend on how bad the ODD is.

Children with ODD may need to try different therapists and types of therapies before they find what works for them. Treatment may include:

- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy.** A child learns to better solve problems and communicate. They also learn how to control impulses and anger.
- **Family therapy.** This therapy helps make changes in the family. It improves communication skills and family interactions. Having a child with ODD can be very challenging for caregivers. It can also cause problems for siblings. Caregivers and siblings need support and understanding.
- **Peer group therapy.** A child learns better social skills.
- **Medicines.** These are not often used to treat ODD. But a child may need them for other symptoms or disorders, such as ADHD or anxiety disorders.

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