

# CHILDHOOD DEPRESSION

## SYMPTOMS

- Depressed or irritable mood
- Decreased interest/pleasure in most activities
- Significant weight change (+/-)
- Significant change in appetite (+/-)
- Change in sleep (+/-)
- Easily agitated or overly subdued
- Fatigue/loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness and/or inappropriate guilt
- Thoughts of suicide or has formulated a suicide plan\*

\*IF YOUR CHILD IS SUICIDAL, PLEASE CALL 911 OR TAKE THEM TO AN EMERGENCY ROOM IMMEDIATELY.

## TREATMENT

There are excellent and appropriate treatment options for childhood depression. The mental health research is clear: treatment with a combination of medication and counseling is the most successful in improving quality of life. Please discuss these options with your pediatrician.

## ACTION PLAN

Unfortunately, there is a shortage of qualified mental health providers in the area. Therefore, it can be a frustratingly long wait to have a complete evaluation and an adequate treatment plan formulated. As long as your child is NOT suicidal, you may practice the following exercises while you wait for an appointment. These are great tips to also employ with children who are not experiencing significant symptoms, but are feeling sad, stressed, or anxious. Please talk to your pediatrician for more information.

- Spend quality time with your child. Be interactive, have fun, be silly, be affectionate.
- Perform deep breathing exercises. Slowly breath in for a count of 4. Slowly breath out for a count of 4. Repeat until calm.
- Perform self-talking exercises. We all talk to ourselves in our brain. So, practice that with positive, happy, calming thoughts.
- Perform positivity exercises. List 3 positive aspects of the day and explain why they were positive.
- Exercise.
- Highlight passions or expertise and participate in those.
- Increase social support by spending quality time with family and friends.