

SAFE Kids HEALTHY Kids HAPPY Kids



Treating Teens with Anti-Depressants

Depression is a common problem among children and teens. Treatment often involves therapy, school involvement, family involvement and sometimes medication. Many drugs treat depression.

A British study suggested that children under 18 should not take the drugs Paxal, Zoloft, Effexor or Celexa. It suggested an increased risk of suicidal behavior during the first 9 days of use. There is also a risk after a dosage change.

In 2004, the FDA and a panel of experts said that "...the data are not black-and-white in providing a clear and definitive answer." This group suggests that teens who must take an antidepressant should be closely watched, especially when starting the medication.

Suicidal thinking and behaviors are common in depression. It is hard to say if the suicidal behavior stated in the study is part of the depression or the medication. In the United States, the FDA has approved Prozac for treating depression in children.

Parents who are concerned about this reported risk should contact their child's doctor. It is *very important* to *not* suddenly stop their child's

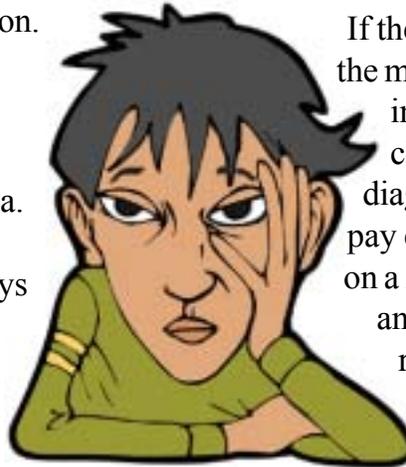
medication without their doctor's knowledge. This could cause physical symptoms. It could also make the depression worse.

If the child is going to have difficulty with the medication, it will usually happen early in the treatment. Families should pay close attention to a child who is diagnosed with depression. They should pay extra attention if their child is started on a *new* medication. Changes in behavior and any possible side effects should be reported immediately to their child's doctor.

While not the only treatment for depression, medication has been shown to be effective. In the U.S. and Sweden, there has been a significant decrease in the rate of completed suicides for youth. Both of these countries actively treat depression in kids. That includes the use of medication.

It is also important to note that different people respond differently to medication. One drug may not work, while another drug may be helpful.

Medications and therapy have been useful in saving lives and decreasing suffering for children with depression. Work closely *with* your child's doctor and therapist.



 www.nami.org is a useful website for families and friends of people with mental illness. NAMI is a nonprofit, self-help, grassroots, support and advocacy organization. Founded in 1979, NAMI today works to achieve equitable services and treatment for more than 15 million Americans living with severe mental illnesses. Local affiliates and state organizations identify and work on issues most important to their community and state.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.
544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.