

Quick Guide to Oppositional Defiant Disorder

 childmind.org/guide/quick-guide-to-oppositional-defiant-disorder

What is oppositional defiant disorder?

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is a children's mental health disorder that involves defying parents, breaking rules, and other serious behavior problems. All children act out sometimes, but kids who have *oppositional*

oppositional

Disobedient and often hostile behavior directed towards authority figures.

defiant disorder struggle with their behavior regularly. They are often angry or irritable. Their behavior problems are also more extreme. For example, a child with ODD

ODD

see oppositional defiant disorder

might yell at authority figures or throw tantrums if they don't get their way.

In order to be diagnosed with ODD, a child needs to have extreme behavior issues for at least six months.

What are the symptoms of oppositional defiant disorder?

Children with ODD have a pattern of behavior problems. Here are some common symptoms:

- Being unusually angry and irritable
- Frequently losing their temper
- Being easily annoyed
- Arguing with authority figures
- Refusing to follow rules
- Annoying people on purpose
- Blaming others for mistakes

Some children with ODD struggle with disruptive behavior in school. Others only struggle at home with family.

How is oppositional defiant disorder diagnosed?

For a child to be diagnosed with ODD, they must have a pattern of disruptive behavior including at least four symptoms from this list:

- Often loses temper
- Easily annoyed
- Often angry and resentful
- Argues with adults
- Breaks rules
- Annoys or hurts people on purpose
- Blames others for behavior

For *adiagnosis*,

diagnosis

A specific set of signs and symptoms that together define a disorder. For psychiatric disorders, the criteria are based on standards established in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM).

these symptoms also need to last at least six months and involve at least one person who isn't a sibling.

ODD is typically diagnosed in kids in elementary school.

How is oppositional defiant disorder treated?

ODD is treated with *behavioral therapy*

behavioral therapy

A form of treatment that focuses directly on reducing or managing problematic behaviors without particular attention to thoughts, events or circumstances that prompted the behaviors.

or a combination of therapy and medication.

Improving the parent-child relationship is a priority. This means that parents play a big role in treatment. Parent training programs can help parents learn to:

- Set clear expectations
- Use effective praise when kids meet expectations
- Use effective consequences when they don't

These techniques can teach children how to manage their emotions and improve their behavior.

Parent training programs might include sessions with parents and children working together, or just parents alone. Some different programs include:

- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

- Parent Management Training (PMT)
- Defiant Teens
- Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)
- The Incredible Years

Some children might also benefit from:

- **Social skills training** to improve their peer relationships
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** if they are struggling with anxiety or depression
- **Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)** if they are struggling with extreme emotions

There is no FDA-approved medication for ODD. However, medication is sometimes used along with therapy. These include:

- **Antipsychotic medications**, if a child is at risk of being removed from school or the home
- **Stimulant medications**, if a child also has *ADHD*
ADHD
see attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder

or is struggling with impulsivity
- **Antidepressant medications**, if a child also has depression or anxiety

Risk for other disorders

A small percentage of children diagnosed with ODD will go on to develop conduct disorder. Conduct disorder is a more severe behavior disorder that includes criminal acts like stealing, setting fires and hurting people. Getting treatment sooner rather than later makes this less likely.

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