

Health Net of California, Inc. (Health Net)
Health Net Life Insurance Company



Put Your Mind at Ease

CARE FOR YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH THROUGH MHN



[HealthNet.com](https://www.healthnet.com)

A healthy life means your mental, emotional and physical needs get proper attention. Mental health and substance use disorder conditions are more common than you might think. Plus, they happen more often in times of stress and uncertainty. If your child struggles with mental health issues, you are not alone.

You can call 988 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **800-273-8255**. Someone can help you 24/7.

Help Your Child's Behavioral Health



There is a National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health.¹ That's why we want to address behavioral health for all, including children. Behavioral health is the well-being of your mind and body and the actions you take based on this. Behavioral health problems can make it harder for children to cope and become resilient as adults.

Your child can set up strong habits now, to build a good quality of life for them in the future. That includes skills to learn life lessons, make friends and manage their emotions. If your child gets the right help early on, they can deal with problems better later in life.²

Three common behavioral health issues are:

- **Anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **Substance Use Disorder (SUD)**



One in five children has a behavioral health issue each year.³ Before COVID-19, about **13.2** million kids, between the ages of **3** and **17**, had anxiety, depression or another condition. **The pandemic has made this worse.**



¹ <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>

² <https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/children-s-behavioral-health.aspx>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/features/child-mental-health.html>



You and your child can learn to manage anxiety!

Children have fears, worries and sadness as they grow up. This is normal. But, if those feelings are frequent, your child may have anxiety. You can learn the symptoms. And, how to address them.

Spot the signs

Anxiety can show up in different ways, including:

- Trouble with sleep, mood swings and touchiness
- Lack of focus, confidence or engagement in daily situations
- Frequent headaches, upset stomach or lack of appetite
- Fear of time (or distance) away from a parent or caregiver
- Fear that something bad will happen
- Fear of dogs, people, bugs, places and objects
- Refusal to go to school

Everyone has their own sense of anxiety, and your child may feel only some of these things. What matters is that your child can share concerns with you and get help.





Try these tips to help your child manage challenges

10 tips to help your anxious child:

- 1 Pay attention to them
- 2 Let them know you're there to help
- 3 Don't dismiss how your child feels
- 4 Help your child take deep breaths
- 5 Try to stick to a routine, but stay flexible
- 6 Allow extra time and avoid rushing, such as before school
- 7 Prepare healthy meals and reduce the amount of sugar they eat and drink
- 8 Make sure your child gets plenty of exercise and enough sleep
- 9 Share quality one-on-one time with books, art and laughs
- 10 Try to stay calm and take care of yourself



Get support

Anxiety can have many causes, so let your child's doctor know what you've noticed and experienced.

They may suggest your child visit with a therapist to talk about concerns or issues. The therapist will create a safe place for your child to talk about their fears and worries. Plus, you and your child can get important tools and life skills.

If your child ever tells you that they're thinking about causing harm to themselves or others, get help right away. **Call 988 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255. Someone can help you 24/7.**

It's not your fault.

Your child's anxiety doesn't make you a bad parent. In fact, you can strengthen the bond with your child in these tough moments.

Childhood depression is real⁴

The rates of depression for kids have gone up in recent years. Yet, information and awareness of the impact has not kept pace. Anyone can feel down, misunderstood and experience the stigma of mental illness.⁵

What we know:

- **Depression is a serious health condition.** Untreated depression can lead to future prolonged and severe episodes and an increased risk of suicide.
- **Depression often has various causes.** Any treatment plan needs to **match** the person and their needs.
- Treatment options for youth depression have been **widely tested, proven and adopted** through studies over the years.
- Childhood depression can easily get missed. If you notice and find treatment early, that can **save and change a life.**
- **Social change** and information about experiences have made an impact on **mental health stigma.**



⁴ <https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/childhood-depression>

⁵ <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=substance-abusechemical-dependence-in-adolescents-90-P01643>



Who depression affects

Children or teens who have family members with a history of depression or other mood issues (such as bipolar disorder) are more likely to deal with it. While these kids may inherit a greater risk for depression, that does not mean that the child or teen *will* get it.

Children with chronic or severe medical conditions are at a greater risk of suffering from depression.



Common signs

Depression does not show up in the same way for younger people as with adults. Younger children are more likely to:

- **Have physical symptoms, such as aches or pains, trouble with sleep or restlessness**
- **Show distress during separation from parents**
- **Lack emotional control or know how to talk about how they feel**

Not all symptoms have to occur for a diagnosis, but if they happen most days, for at least two weeks, your child may have depression, and you should talk about this with their doctor.





Stop substance use disorders (SUD) before they start

SUD for a young person can:⁵

- **Impede physical and social development**
- **Increase the risk of mental health disorders**
- **Lead to harmful choices like unsafe sex**

Watch your child for signs of SUD. If young teens start to use drugs, they are at very high risk for addiction and other disorders.



Trust your eyes and instincts

Your child may have items for drug use or containers of alcohol. Altered behavioral patterns can also suggest that danger.

Signs of SUD include:

- Self-isolation and emotional distancing
- Less interest in self-care
- Lying
- Hostility
- Changes in their friend group
- Negative changes in school performance

Physical signs include:

- Fatigue
- Frequent illness
- Lethargy
- Vomiting⁷



Speak and act sooner

Have an honest talk with your child. The sooner you can address the causes, the more likely the recovery from SUD. If you think your child has signs of SUD, contact their doctor right away.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a guide for medical staff to screen for SUD and treat it.⁸ Parents and caregivers can also use it to protect their children from SUD.

Learn more at https://www.healthnet.com/content/healthnet/en_us/population-health-management.html.

⁵ <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=substance-abusechemical-dependence-in-adolescents-90-P01643>

⁶ <https://drugfree.org/article/spotting-drug-use/>

⁷ <https://www.ataloma.com/signs-of-sud-in-your-children-and-how-to-recognize-them/>

⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/features/teen-substance-use.html>

Protect Your Child's Wellness

Your child's health matters, in mind or body. Health Net can help you and your child deal with all mental health issues.

With your early action and special care, your child can feel happy and adjust well as they grow up.



Call the number on the back of your Health plan to find a mental health specialist for your child or yourself. You can also call to ask questions or reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline **800-273-TALK (8255)** or call **988**.

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