



Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

Information from Diane Stanoszek

*Director of Milestone Centers'
Children's Community Based Services*



Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is a condition in which a child displays an ongoing pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and/or hostile behavior toward people in authority. The child's behavior often disrupts the child's normal daily activities, including activities within the family and at school.

What symptoms can signal that a child has ODD, as opposed to just “misbehaving”?

Sometimes it is difficult to recognize the difference between a “misbehaving” child and one with ODD. It is normal to display oppositional behavioral during certain stages of development. Even the best behaved child can be challenging at times. If the child or teen has frequent and persistent patterns of anger, irritability, arguing, defiance and/or vindictiveness toward parents and other authority figures, he/she may have ODD.

Is there a known cause for ODD?

There is no known cause of ODD. Contributing causes may be a combination of inherited or genetic and environmental factors.

Is ODD common among children?

Signs of ODD generally begins during preschool years. Sometimes, ODD may develop later, but almost always before early teens. Rates of ODD ranges from 2%-16% have been reported.

How is ODD treated?

Treatment of ODD involves therapy, training to help build positive family interactions and skills to manage behaviors, and possibly medications.

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What can family / loved ones / school systems to do support and help kids with ODD?

- Give clear instructions and follow through with appropriate consequences if needed.
- Recognize and praise child's good behavior to promote desired behaviors.
- Model the behavior you want child to have.
- Pick your battle and avoid power struggles.
- Set a routine
- Build in time together

What type of counseling/training is available for parents/families to help them deal with ODD in their child?

Parent training is available to develop parenting skills that are more positive. Individual and family therapy to learn to express feelings in a healthy way and to improve communication is also useful. Cognitive behavior therapy to help children identify and change thought patterns that lead to negative behavior. Social skills training to help children to learn how to interact more positively with peers.

What are the risks if ODD goes untreated?

Poor school performance, antisocial behavior, poor impulse control, substance abuse and suicide.

Do children typically grow out of ODD? If so, is there a typical age range when that occurs?

With perseverance and consistency, hard work pays off with improved behaviors and relationships.

Can ODD be prevented? Is there a "cure"?

There is no guaranteed way to prevent ODD. However, positive parenting and early treatment can help improve behavior and prevent it from getting worse.

Call Milestone for more information and to seek help: 412-243-3400.