

## Oppositional Defiant Disorder

It is normal for children's behavior to be difficult from time to time, especially when they are tired or hungry. It is also common for young children and teens to question authority and test limits. Children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) show a problematic pattern of not listening to adult direction, doing what they are told not to do, and being very angry and hostile. Children with ODD have these problems so often that it affects their school work, family life, and friendships with others. Five to fifteen percent of all school-age children have ODD.

### Symptoms of ODD

Children with ODD will have several of the following symptoms:

- frequent temper tantrums
- often arguing with adults
- refusing to obey rules
- trying to annoy or upset other people
- blaming others for everything
- being touchy or easily annoyed
- frequently acting as if rules/life situations are unfair
- trying to get back at people who upset them

### Causes of ODD

Scientists do not know the causes of ODD. Many parents report that their child with ODD was more difficult and demanding than the child's brothers and sisters at an early age. Sometimes, the way that parents respond to the child's behavior causes the problem to be worse.

A child's home life or past difficult experiences may partly cause ODD. In these situations, ODD is more likely to occur:

- having a parent who drinks or takes drugs
- having a parent with a mental illness
- being abused or neglected
- being punished harshly and/or inconsistently
- not having enough supervision
- frequent family moves and changes schools or daycares
- not having friends
- being exposed to violence
- having parents with a troubled marriage or who are divorced

### Treatment of ODD

Many times, children with ODD have other problems, too, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or a learning disorder. The child should be examined for these problems and many others. Other illnesses may need to be treated before the child can improve his or her ODD behavior.

**Parent Training Programs:** Parents of children with ODD can learn how to control the child's behavior by attending parenting programs. During these programs, parents learn ways to deal with oppositional behavior, ways to discipline children, and ways to praise good behavior. They also receive support and understanding from other parents with the same problem.

**Therapy:** In therapy, the child can learn to control anger, get along better with family and friends, and learn how to solve problems without getting upset. In social skills groups with other children, the child with ODD can practice getting along with others.

### Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness  
www.nami.org ~ (812) 423-4333

Mental Health America  
www.nmha.org ~ (812) 426-2640

National Institute of Mental Health  
www.nimh.nih.gov

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry  
www.aacap.org