

# What are the signs your child may be experiencing depression?

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The COVID-19 pandemic has created a challenging year for most Canadians – and children and youth are not immune to the mental health impacts it has caused, including depression.

According to [new crowdsourced data](#) by Statistics Canada, 57 per cent of youth ages 15 to 17 who participated in the survey reported that their mental health has worsened since physical distancing measures were put in place.

The mental health of younger children is also at stake.

Child and family [therapist Daniela Shulman](#) said that social isolation due to COVID-19 can trigger depressive symptoms in children, especially those who already have a history of depression or who have family members who may be depressed.

“A lot of things that help depression are kind of out of reach, like social contact, a lot of after-school activities, things that kind of increase serotonin and happiness in children,” she added.

[Therapist Katie Ryzebol](#) agreed, adding that it’s important for parents to look for certain changes in their children’s moods and behaviours, and to not be afraid to ask tough questions or seek help when needed.

## What are the signs of depression in children?

Ryzebol and Shulman said when looking for signs of depression in children, parents should be paying attention to the following physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms:

- Low energy level (Is your child tired? Is there a lack of energy? Are they sleeping more or less than usual?)
- Changes in diet (Is there a change in their weight, or a loss or increase in appetite?)
- Prolonged sadness (Is your child’s sadness more persistent and severe?)
- Lack of excitement (Are they demonstrating a lack of interest in things they were interested in before?)
- Social withdrawal (Are they distancing themselves more?)
- Changes in communication (Are they oversharing? Is there a lack of communication? Is there a lot of negative self-talk? Are they more irritable or angry?)

Shulman said that while sadness is normal to see in children, depression means these symptoms are more persistent and generally last for longer than two weeks.