Your Child's Mental Health: What You Should Know

There are many factors that can affect children and young people's social, emotional, and mental well-being. It's not always easy to know if your child's sadness, angry outbursts or some other emotional or behavioral problem is an indicator of something that may require professional attention.

What to watch for

Look for patterns of behavior vs. isolated incidents that may appear as the following:

- Sudden changes in mood – including if your child is often sad, worried or fearful
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies they once liked
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Bedwetting
- Nightmares
- Clingy behavior
- Acting out behavior such as tantrums
- Is spending most of his or her time alone instead of with friends or family
- Declining grades or interest in school
- Is hyperactive, impulsive or has trouble concentrating
- Is self-destructive or overly aggressive toward others

Next steps

If applicable, **talk with the teacher** about your child's behavior in school, daycare, during lunch or on the playground.

Speak to your pediatrician especially if your child's behavior or emotional difficulties last for more than a few weeks and are causing problems. A mental health specialist can complete an evaluation to determine if treatment is necessary.

Points to remember

Always seek **immediate help if a child engages in unsafe behavior or talks about wanting to hurt himself or herself** or someone else.

Early treatment can help address a child's current difficulties and **prevent more serious problems** in the future.

For more support: Health Advocate can connect you to the right mental health resources.

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