

WHAT IS OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANCE DISORDER (ODD)?

What is Oppositional Defiance Disorder?

Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) is a behavioral condition where an individual displays a persistent pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and even hostile behavior towards authority figures (ex. parents, teachers, etc.). **ODD** can make it hard for an individual to get through normal daily tasks and to build relationships with others.

It mostly affects children but if it is not properly diagnosed and treated, ODD behaviors may continue into adulthood.

What causes Oppositional Defiance Disorder?

Researchers believe ODD is caused by a combination of genetic, biological, and environmental factors:

Genetic factors:

Research suggests that about 50% of ODD cases can be traced to genetics. This means that if someone has family members with ODD, there is a higher chance that person will also have ODD compared to someone who does not. A child's personality, or temperament, might also play a role in ODD diagnosis.

Biological factors:

ODD has been linked to problems with brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. These chemicals help nerve cells in your brain talk to each other. If they are not working right, it may cause symptoms of ODD.

Environmental factors:

Certain life situations may also lead to ODD. These include having a troubled family life, experiencing childhood abuse or neglect, inconsistent or harsh parenting, being rejected by peers, living in poverty, and facing neighborhood violence.

Common risk factors that can increase the chance of a child developing ODD include:

- Difficulty Managing Emotions
- History of Child Abuse or Neglect
- Parent's Mental Health: If a parent or caregiver has a mood disorder or struggles with drugs or alcohol.
- Exposure to Violence
- Inconsistent Discipline and Lack of Adult Supervision
- Family instability: Frequent moves, financial instability, divorce, or frequently changing schools
- Having Parents with ODD or ADHD: If parents have ODD, ADHD, or other behavior conditions, it might affect their child.

How common is Oppositional Defiance Disorder?

ODD mostly affects children and teenagers but it can also affect adults. Research estimates that ODD affects between 2% and 11% of children.

Males are more likely to have ODD when they are younger compared to females. However, as teenagers, both males and females are equally likely to receive an ODD diagnosis.

How is Oppositional Defiance Disorder diagnosed?

To diagnose ODD, mental health professionals do a thorough psychological exam. This will be done with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5).

What are some of the common signs/symptoms? How is Oppositional Defiance Disorder expressed?

Signs of healthy development in children include some level of oppositional and defiant behaviors. For instance, if a child starts saying “no” all the time, it’s usually considered a normal part of development. What makes ODD behavior different from normal oppositional behavior is the **severity and duration** of these behaviors. There needs to be evidence of impairment either in the form of distress from the child, family, or peers and/or a negative impact on their social, educational, occupational, or other areas of life. These kinds of behavior problems often start when kids are in preschool but can start up until they are around 10 years old.

Signs and symptoms you may observe include:

1. Anger and irritability

- Frequently lose their temper easily.
- Have frequent outbursts of anger and resentment.
- Be touchy and or easily annoyed by others.
- Be frequently angry and/or disrespectful.

2. Argumentative and defiant behavior

- Excessively argue with adults and authority figures.
- Actively refuses to comply with requests and rules.
- Blame others for their own mistakes.
- Deliberately try to annoy or upset others.

3. Vindictiveness (hurtful and revengeful behavior)

- Being spiteful and seeking revenge.
- Saying mean and hateful things when angry or upset.
- Blaming others for their mistakes or misbehavior.

A child with ODD will present extreme behaviors for **at least six months**.

ODD can be mild, moderate, or severe. Mild ODD presents as symptoms occurring in one setting (i.e. at home, at school, at family members home, at day camp, at work etc.). ODD is considered moderate when symptoms take place in at least two settings. Severe ODD is when symptoms are observed in three or more settings.

What are some possible related disorders?

Individuals with ODD often have at least one other mental health condition. They can have one, many, or no other conditions. These include but are not limited to:

- Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Anxiety disorder
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Learning differences
- Mood disorders such as depression
- Impulse control disorder

Treating these other mental health conditions may help reduce ODD symptoms in the child and the impact ODD has on their family and peers. It may be difficult to successfully treat ODD when other conditions are present and need treatment.

About 30% of children with ODD develop a more serious behavior disorder called **conduct disorder (CD)**. Children and teenagers with CD show serious patterns of aggression towards others, violation of rules, and social norms at home, school and with peers.

Signs of CD you might observe in your children or teenager include:

- Frequent rule breaking such as running away from home, staying out at night when told not to, and skipping school.
- Being aggressive in a way that causes harm to other beings. Things like bullying, fighting or being cruel to animals repetitively.
- Lying, stealing or damaging other people’s property on purpose.

Do symptoms change over time?

Some children overcome ODD either by outgrowing ODD or receiving proper treatment for it. However, others will continue to have symptoms through adulthood.

What are some of the risks of having Oppositional Defiance Disorder?

Having ODD often leads to strained relationships with parents, siblings, teachers, peers, and authority figures in general. Children and teens with ODD may struggle to connect and keep healthy relationships and friendships.

ODD may lead to other problems such as:

- Poor school and work performance
- Antisocial behavior
- Legal problems
- Substance use disorder
- Suicide

How can I support someone with Oppositional Defiance Disorder

Early treatment is the key to preventing future problems when it comes to ODD. Each child will have a different treatment depending on their unique profile (e.g., symptoms, age, health, and ODD severity).

Your child may benefit from:

- **Parent Management training:** to help the parents and others manage the child with ODD's behaviour.
- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy:** to help the child learn how to solve problems, communicate, control impulses and anger.
- **Family therapy:** to help with communication skills and family interactions. This also aims to provide support for parents and siblings as living with a child with ODD can be difficult.
- **Medicines:** these are often used to treat ODD but also for other associated disorders such as ADHD, anxiety, and mood disorders.

If your child has ODD, aside from getting them professional care you can help them in everyday life by:

- Giving your child praise and positive reinforcement when they show flexibility and cooperation. The goal is to build on the positives.
- Ensuring that you take a break when needed.

Conflict with a child with ODD can easily get out of hand, if you sense that conflict will escalate, step away. This is also a good example for your child when it comes to conflict management.

- Set a routine with your child for your regular daily schedule. You can work with your child to build the schedule if it is age appropriate.
- Build in time within your weekly schedule with your child that includes you and them doing something together that is fun.

• This fact sheet is for general information only and does not replace professional medical advice. If provided to clients and their family, it must be reviewed with them to ensure understanding and address any questions or concerns.

• Please keep in mind that a disability is only one part of a person. Identifying and fostering their strengths will be critical for supporting the person to reach their goals.

• For more information on traditional practices that may apply, please refer to the Nishiiyuu department of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay.