Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is a childhood behavioural problem characterised by constant disobedience and hostility. The quality of parenting seems to be an important factor in the development of ODD. Treatment options include parent management training and family therapy.

ODD is one of a group of behavioural disorders known collectively as disruptive behaviour disorders, which include conduct disorder (CD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Early intervention and treatment is important, since children with untreated ODD may continue to be difficult and antisocial into their adult years. This can impact on their relationships, career prospects and quality of life. Some children with ODD will develop the more serious conduct disorder (CD), which is characterised by aggressive law-breaking and violent behaviours.

Characteristics of ODD

ODD behaviours usually surface when the child is at primary school, but the disorder can be found in children as young as three years of age.

A child with ODD may:

- Become easily angered, annoyed or irritated
- Have frequent temper tantrums
- Argue frequently with adults, particularly the most familiar adults in their lives such as parents
- Refuse to obey rules
- Seem to deliberately try to annoy or aggravate others
- Have low self-esteem
- Have a low frustration threshold
- Seek to blame others for any accidents or bad behaviour.

Link to conduct disorder

Without intervention and treatment, some children with ODD progress to develop conduct disorder (CD), which is characterised by aggressive and delinquent behaviours including:

- Lying
- Being sadistic or cruel to animals and people
- Physically or sexually abusing others
- Law-breaking behaviours such as deliberately lighting fires, vandalism or stealing.

Family life and ODD

The cause of disruptive behaviour disorders is unknown, but the quality of the child’s family life seems to be an important factor in the development of ODD. Some studies have found that certain environmental factors in the family increase the risk of disruptive behaviour disorders. These include:

- Poor parenting skills (inadequate supervision, harsh or inconsistent discipline, rejection)
- Marital conflict
- Domestic violence
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Poverty
- Substance misuse by parents or carers.

Diagnosis of ODD

ODD is professionally diagnosed by a child psychologist, child psychiatrist or paediatrician specialising in behavioural disorders. Diagnosis involves detailed interviews with the child (if they are old enough), parents and teachers, and comparing the child’s behaviour with the checklist for ODD contained in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders from the American Psychiatric Association.
Treatment of ODD

Treatment options for ODD may include:

- Parental training – to help the parents better manage and interact with their child, including behavioural techniques that reinforce good behaviour and discourage bad behaviour. This is the primary form of treatment and the most effective. Social support is increased if the parents are trained in groups with other parents who have children with ODD.
- Functional family therapy – to teach all family members to communicate and problem-solve more effectively.
- Consistency of care – all care providers of the child (including parents, grandparents, teachers, child care workers and so on) need to be consistent in the way they behave towards and manage the child.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Australian Psychological Society – Find a Psychologist Service Tel. (03) 8662 3300 or Tel. 1800 333 497
- Child psychiatrist
- Paediatrician
- Association for Children with a Disability Tel. (03) 9818 2000, rural callers free call on 1800 654 013

Things to remember

- Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is a childhood behavioural problem characterised by constant disobedience and hostility.
- The quality of parenting seems to be an important factor in the development of ODD.
- Treatment options include parent management training and family therapy.

References

3/4 Questions

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More information

Behavioural conditions

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Behavioural conditions explained
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Disruptive behaviour disorders

Behavioural conditions explained

- Behavioural disorders in children
  Untreated behavioural disorders in children may mean they grow up to be dysfunctional adults.
- Childhood developmental delay and disability early intervention
  Early childhood interventions help babies and young children with developmental delays or disabilities.
- Early support for a child with disabilities
  For children diagnosed with a disability, getting the support they need as early as possible will give them the best chance of minimising the long-term effects of the disability.

Autism spectrum disorders

- Autism spectrum disorder and adults
  A person with Asperger syndrome often has trouble understanding the emotions of other people.
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
  ASD is a complex disorder that affects a person's ability to interact with the world around them.
- Autism spectrum disorder - tips for parents
  Autism spectrum disorder is a lifelong condition, but you are not on your own and there are plenty of professionals and groups who can help.

Disruptive behaviour disorders

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
  Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a behavioural disorder, not an illness or a sign of low intelligence.
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder - adults
An adult with properly managed ADHD often shows great imagination and creative flair.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder - therapies
Children with ADHD may benefit from medication or other therapies, or a combination of both.

Behavioural disorders in children
Untreated behavioural disorders in children may mean they grow up to be dysfunctional adults.

Borderline personality disorder
People with borderline personality disorder may exhibit extreme behaviour, such as repeated self-mutilation or taking overdoses of medication.

Conduct disorder
Children with untreated conduct disorder are at increased risk of problems including substance use, personality disorders and mental illnesses.

Related Information

- A Healthy Start to School
  A Healthy Start to School – a guide for parents of children in their foundation year of school...
- A Healthy Start to School
  A Healthy Start to School – a guide for parents of children in their foundation year of school...
- Asthma explained
  Asthma cannot be cured, but with good management people with asthma can lead normal, active lives.
- Conduct disorder
  Children with untreated conduct disorder are at increased risk of problems including substance use, personality disorders and mental illnesses.
- Behavioural disorders in children
  Untreated behavioural disorders in children may mean they grow up to be dysfunctional adults.

Home

Related information on other websites

- Mayo Clinic – Oppositional defiant disorder

Content Partner

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