Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder (DMDD)



A guide for children, teens, and caregivers

Disruptive mood dysregulation disorder (DMDD) is a childhood mood condition involving severe, repeated temper outbursts and an irritable or angry mood between them. Symptoms affect daily life in more than one setting, such as home and school. A child mental health clinician assesses the pattern over time and considers other explanations.

Common symptoms

- Frequent, intense outbursts
- An irritable or angry mood between outbursts
- Strong frustration with everyday limits
- Reactions beyond what is expected for the child's age
- Problems at home, school, or with peers

Why does it happen?

The exact causes are still being studied. Biological, social, and environmental factors may contribute. A careful assessment helps identify a child's needs and suitable support.

Treatment and outlook

A clinician gathers the child's perspective and caregiver and teacher observations, and checks for other explanations. CBT-based work can help a child notice rising frustration and practice coping skills. Parent training teaches adults to anticipate difficult situations and respond consistently.

Medication may sometimes be added or used with therapy from the start. No medicine is FDA-approved specifically for DMDD, and research on DMDD treatment remains limited. Ask what symptom a medicine targets, what risks to watch for, and how benefit will be judged.

Coordinate support at home and school. Review safety, learning, relationships, and the child's own experience, as well as the frequency of outbursts.

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Living with DMDD

Practical steps between appointments



Home and school

Plan ahead: Notice common triggers and prepare for changes with clear expectations and a predictable routine.

Practice skills: Rehearse a calming break when settled. Praise specific efforts to handle frustration safely.

Be consistent: Use calm, brief directions. Agree on responses with caregivers and teachers, and get support for your own stress.

When to seek help

Seek assessment when irritability and outbursts disrupt learning, relationships, or home life.

Get immediate help for unsafe behavior or threats of harm.

Get urgent help

For suicidal thoughts or a mental health crisis, call or text **988** in the US. Call **911** for immediate danger or a life-threatening emergency. Children and teens: tell a trusted adult right away.

For your next appointment

Bring brief notes on triggers, length of outbursts, recovery, and what helped. Are calm periods improving? Review the safety plan and support for siblings and caregivers.

Learn more

psychiatry-atlas.com

Sources and References

1. **Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder: The Basics**
National Institute of Mental Health · Revised 2023
https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/disruptive-mood-dysregulation-disorder