

Psychiatric Differential Diagnoses for Common Pediatric Problems in Primary Care

ECHO Ontario CYMH Resources



Presenting Problem	Most Likely Diagnosis	Less Likely Diagnosis
Anxiety	• Normal stage of development • Shy, inhibited temperament • Adjustment Disorder with Anxiety OR with Mixed Anxiety/Depression • Simple or Specific Phobia • Separation Anxiety Disorder • Generalized Anxiety Disorder • Panic Disorder • Acute Stress Disorder • Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (new symptoms for children < 6 YOA) • Major Depressive Disorder • Substance Use related anxiety (during usage or between uses)	• Physical/Sexual/Verbal Abuse (any source) • Witness to Domestic Violence Reactive Attachment Disorder • Obsessive Compulsive Disorder • Psychotic Disorders • Dissociative Disorders • Bereavement Disorders • Selective Mutism
Sadness	• Normal reaction to environmental change • Negative, dramatic temperament • Adjustment Disorder with Depressed Mood OR with Mixed Anxiety/Depression • Major Depressive Disorder • Substance Use related sadness (during usage or between uses)	• Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder • Physical/Sexual/Verbal Abuse (any source) • Witness to Domestic Violence Major Depressive Disorder with Psychosis • Depressive syndrome as part of Bipolar Disorder • Psychotic disorder • Seasonal Affective Disorder • Dysthymia
Inattention	• Normal for age • Parent-Child Relational Problem • Learning Disability • Anxiety Disorder • Attention Deficit Disorder (with or without Hyperactivity) • Adjustment Disorder with Depressed Mood OR with Mixed Anxiety/Depression • Major Depressive Disorder • Substance Use (during usage or between uses)	• Physical/Sexual/Verbal Abuse (any source) • Witness to Domestic Violence • Acute Stress Disorder • Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Presenting Problem	Most Likely Diagnosis	Less Likely Diagnosis
Hyperactivity	• Normal for age • Parent-Child Relational Problem • Learning Disability • Anxiety Disorder • Attention Deficit Disorder (with or without Hyperactivity) • Substance Use (during usage or between uses)	• Physical/Sexual/Verbal Abuse (any source) • Witness to Domestic Violence • Acute Stress Disorder • Mania • Psychotic Disorder
Aggression	• Normal for age • Parent-Child Relational Problem • Substance Use (during usage or between uses) • Adjustment Disorder with Disturbance of Conduct • Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder • Oppositional Defiant Disorder • Conduct Disorder	• Major Depressive Disorder • Physical/Sexual/Verbal Abuse (any source) • Witness to Domestic Violence • Acute Stress Disorder • Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder • Intermittent Explosive Disorder • Mania • Psychotic Disorders (especially with paranoia)
Rule Non-Compliance	• Normal for age • Parent-Child Relational Problem • Substance Use (during usage or between uses) • Adjustment Disorder with Disturbance of Conduct • Oppositional Defiant Disorder • Conduct Disorder	
Self-Harm	• Major Depressive Disorder • Anxiety Disorder • Substance Use (during usage or between uses) • Parent-Child Relational Problem	• Physical/Sexual/Verbal Abuse (any source) • Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder • Borderline Personality Disorder • Witness to Domestic Violence • Acute Stress Disorder • Psychotic Disorder

Presenting Problem	Most Likely Diagnosis	Less Likely Diagnosis
Sleep Problems	• Normal for age • Environmental factors (light exposure) • No nighttime routine • Parent-Child Relational Problem • Anxiety Disorder (difficulty falling asleep) • Major Depressive Disorder (mid-cycle or early morning awakening) • Substance Use (during usage or between uses)	• Physical/Sexual/Verbal Abuse (any source) • Witness to Domestic Violence • Acute Stress Disorder • Mania • Psychotic Disorder
Problems Eating	• Normal developmental stage • Inflexible temperament (picky eater) • Dieting • Anorexia Nervosa • Bulimia Nervosa	• Obsessive Compulsive Disorder • Psychotic Disorders
Hearing, Seeing, Feeling (somatic sensations) "Things"	<i>"Hearing Things"</i> • Acute Stress Reaction • Psychotic Disorder • Substance Use (during usage or between uses) <i>"Seeing Things"</i> • Active imagination • Part of culture • Acute Stress Reaction • Substance Use (during usage or between uses) <i>"Feeling Things"</i> • Substance Use (during usage or between uses; most often cocaine) • Psychotic disorders	<i>"Hearing Things"</i> • Dissociative Disorders • Bipolar Disorder