

# Family based interpersonal psychotherapy for depressed preadolescents

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A recent study published in the March 2015 issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* finds that Family Based Interpersonal Psychotherapy (FB-IPT) is more effective in treating preadolescent children with depression compared to child-centered therapy (CCT).

Preadolescents with depressive disorders may be under-diagnosed and go untreated because those presenting for outpatient [treatment](#) with clinically significant [depressive symptoms](#) often do not meet full diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). However, preadolescents with depressive symptoms are at increased risk of experiencing MDD in adolescence.

To date, no psychosocial intervention has been established as the superior treatment for preadolescents diagnosed with [depression](#). For this study, researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine randomly assigned 42 preadolescents (ages 7-12) with depression to one of two therapy conditions: FB-IPT, an intervention that included parents in the child's treatment and focused on improving family and peer relationships, or to child-centered therapy (CCT), a supportive [therapy](#) for [children](#).

Depressive symptoms in children were measured by a clinician-rated children's depression rating scale, and mood questionnaires that both the child and parent completed.

Preadolescents receiving FB-IPT had higher rates of remission (66 percent vs. 31 percent), a greater decrease in depressive symptoms from pre- to post-treatment, and lower depressive symptoms at post-treatment than did preadolescents with depression receiving CCT.

Children receiving FB-IPT also reported significant reductions in anxiety symptoms than did preadolescents in the CCT group. In addition, the study demonstrated that FB-IPT helped to reduce social impairment in depressed preadolescents, and these changes were associated with decreases in their depressive symptoms.

"These findings provide strong support for Family Based Interpersonal Psychotherapy as an effective treatment for depression in children between the ages of 7-12," said Laura J. Dietz, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and principal investigator of the study. "It also highlights the importance of early intervention for depressed preadolescents who are at risk for depression as teenagers."

**More information:** "Family-Based Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depressed Preadolescents: Examining Efficacy and Potential Treatment Mechanisms," Rebecca J. Weinberg, PsyD. and David A. Brent, M.D., of the University of Pittsburgh and Laura Mufson, Ph. D., of Columbia University ( [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2014.12.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2014.12.011) ) appears in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, Volume 54, Issue 3 (March 2015)

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