ODD: GP information sheet

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) describes a pattern where a child often feels angry or irritable and finds requests and rules very hard. All children push back sometimes; for some, it may happen often enough to strain family and school life. Children with these challenges also have many strengths.

About this sheet. We have written this sheet as psychologists, in the hope that GPs may find some of it useful. It offers general information only and is not a clinical tool.

How it may show up in everyday life

Some people, or the people close to them, may notice things like these. They can look quite different from one person to the next.

At home

- Everyday requests might lead to arguments
- Tempers could flare quickly
- Families may feel worn down

At school

- Following rules might feel hard
- Teachers may share similar observations
- Some days could go much better than others

Feelings

- Children might feel angry or easily annoyed
- Big feelings may be hard to settle
- Underneath, some children may feel misunderstood

With friends

- Friendships might feel harder to keep
- Arguments could happen with peers
- Children may want to belong

For parents

- Parents might feel exhausted or judged
- Approaches that work for siblings may not fit
- Parents may want fresh ideas

Strengths

- Many children are passionate and determined
- Strong will can be a strength
- Good moments are part of the picture

What the person might be bringing

Parents may arrive tired, worried or feeling judged. Children might feel they are always in trouble, which can be hard to carry.

A warm, curious conversation may help it feel safer to talk. Feeling heard can be a meaningful first step.

What GPs already do well

Opening gently

GPs are often the first person a family talks to. A gentle opening can help parents share what family life is like.

Listening to the story

GPs often know the person, and sometimes their family, over many years. That wider view of someone's life can be very valuable.

A steady point of contact

As people explore their options, the GP can remain a familiar, steady presence, working alongside other professionals.

Seeing the whole person

GPs often hold the bigger picture of a family's health and wellbeing, which can help families feel understood.

What psychology may offer

Understanding

- Time to make sense of what is happening
- Exploring the child's feelings and needs
- Recognising strengths as well as challenges
- A safe space for the child and family

Practical and family support

- Parenting programs and support
- Skills for managing big feelings
- Support for the whole family
- Working alongside schools and other professionals

Everyday things some people find helpful

These are simply possibilities. What helps one person may not suit another.

- Calm, predictable routines
- Noticing and praising positive moments
- Clear, simple expectations
- One on one time together
- Time to calm down before talking
- Looking after parents' own wellbeing

Trusted Australian resources

Raising Children Network raisingchildren.net.au

Emerging Minds emergingminds.com.au

Parentline ACT parentlineact.org.au | 02 6287 3833

Referring to Strategic Psychology

Our psychologists work with children, adolescents and adults. If a client would like to see one of our team, they can call us on 02 6262 6157 or visit strategicpsychology.com.au. Medicare rebates may be available with a GP referral.

This sheet offers general information for GPs to consider. It does not replace clinical judgement.