

## Researching mood, behavior, and brain mechanisms associated with irritability in children

Children pass through many phases of development as they grow up. It can be hard to know if a child is going through normal development or showing signs of something more serious. Occasional outbursts are a normal outcome of being tired, uncomfortable, or frustrated. In some children it can be chronic and explosive.

**Children who enroll in our studies have irritability that significantly impacts their functioning at home, in school, and with other children.**

Why study irritability? After years of studies, NIMH researchers concluded that severe irritability can be very impairing for children, and little is known about what causes it or how to treat it. Therefore, today, NIMH clinicians continue to investigate severe irritability and the related diagnosis of Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder (DMDD).



**Disruptive  
Mood  
Dysregulation  
Disorder**

## Learning about brain mechanisms underlying irritability and seeking better treatments for it

**Melissa A. Brotman, Ph.D.** is the Director of Neuroscience and Novel Therapeutics, Emotion and Development Branch. As a Clinical Psychologist with extensive research and clinical training in cognitive behavioral therapy, she leads a team using neuroscience to understand brain function and develop novel interventions. Her current studies focus on computer-based training and cognitive behavioral therapy for irritability in youth.

**Ellen Leibenluft, M.D.** is the Chief of the Section on Mood Dysregulation and Neuroscience. She leads a research team that includes physicians, scientists, and clinicians (psychologists, nurses, and social workers) who have expertise in mental health. The team is investigating the brain mechanisms underlying severe mood disorders in children.

**Katharina Kircanski, Ph.D.** is a Clinical Psychologist in the Section on Mood Dysregulation and Neuroscience. She plays a prominent role in the team's clinical research on novel interventions.

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[www.nimh.nih.gov/JoinAStudy](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/JoinAStudy)  
(Pediatric Studies, Irritability)



The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the nation's medical research agency located in Bethesda, Maryland just north of Washington, DC. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) supports scientists who specialize in the brain and behavior of those with mental illness.

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## NIH RESEARCH STUDIES

Enrolling Children  
and Adolescents  
Ages 8 to 17

Are you walking on eggshells around your  
**IRRITABLE CHILD?**



**CRANKY, GRUMPY,  
MOODY, FRUSTRATED,  
ANGRY**



# Walking on eggshells around your child?

## Cranky, Grumpy, Irritable, Moody, Angry, Frustrated

### NIH RESEARCH STUDIES

#### What is a Clinical Research Study?

A clinical research study is often called a clinical trial or a protocol. Both are scientific studies conducted in a clinic or hospital setting with patients as research participants. Children must meet the study's eligibility requirements, and parent and child must consent to participate in a study.

**These studies seek to find out more about children who are very irritable and if the research treatment can be effective.**

#### Observational Study

- 1-day outpatient evaluation
- Study describes moods and behaviors
- Up to 10 follow-up visits that include diagnostic assessments, questionnaires, memory and thinking tasks, computer tasks, and brain imaging

[Protocol #02-M-0021]

#### Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- 12 therapy sessions and 20 weeks of evaluation
- Child remains on current medications
- Evaluate techniques and strategies to manage and modify irritability and disruptive behavior
- Will also use technology, such as mobile phones to assist with treatment

[Protocol #15-M-0182]



Study participants can help us better understand the mind.



### JOIN A RESEARCH STUDY Ages 8 to 17

Eligible children may be offered a diagnostic assessment, a new approach to cognitive behavioral therapy, or non-treatment research options.

#### To participate in these studies a child must be:

- Ages 8 to 17, and able to perform procedures that include computer tasks, testing, and brain imaging
- In treatment with a physician
- Medically healthy, and not currently hospitalized, psychotic, or suicidal
- Willing to consent to participate



#### Can my child remain on medication?

Children can stay on their current medications.

#### What does it cost to participate?

There is no cost to enroll. Travel is arranged by NIMH. Children and parents are compensated for participation.

#### Where are the studies conducted?

The studies are conducted in Bethesda, Maryland at the NIH Clinical Center (the largest clinical research hospital in the world) with outpatient clinic visits.

#### Can a child with an ADHD diagnosis join the Observational Study?

Yes, the study also enrolls eligible children with an ADHD diagnosis, as a comparison group to children with severe irritability.



Children with an ADHD diagnosis are also invited to participate as a comparison group in the Observational Study.



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(Pediatric Studies, Irritability)

#### To Join a Study:

1. Call NIMH
2. Learn more about the study
3. Ask about eligibility
4. Consent to participation