

Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the feeling of fear or panic. Anxiety is a normal feeling which we all experience when we face threatening or difficult situations.

For a child with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time.

The feelings from anxiety can interfere with daily activities such as school work, play and relationships including relationships with teachers, family and friends.

What are the types of anxiety disorders?

There are several different types of anxiety disorders in children. Children and young people with anxiety usually experience anxiety in the following ways:

- Generalized anxiety disorder - extreme, unrealistic worry and tension, even if there's little or nothing to stimulate the anxiety
- Social anxiety disorder - overwhelming worry and self-consciousness about everyday social situations. The worry often centers on a fear of being judged by others, or behaving in a way that might cause embarrassment
- Panic attacks - children with this condition have feelings of fear that come on suddenly and again and again with no warning. Other symptoms of a panic attack include sweating, chest pain, palpitations (unusually strong or irregular heartbeats), and a feeling of choking
- Phobias - children who have phobias feel very nervous and panicky about one thing in particular. The thing that he/she might be anxious about may not be dangerous or troublesome to anyone else but can make him/her feel really nervous or panicky

What are the symptoms?

Generalized anxiety disorder symptoms may include:

- Constant thoughts and intense fears about the safety of parents and family
- Refusing to go to school
- Regular stomach aches and other physical complaints
- Extreme worries about sleeping away from home
- Being overly clingy
- Panic or tantrums when separated from parents
- Trouble sleeping or nightmares

[More information on the back](#)

Social anxiety symptoms may include:

- Fear of meeting or talking to people
- Avoiding being social or interacting with groups of people
- Few friends outside the family

Phobia symptoms include:

- Extreme fear about a specific thing or situation (example. dogs, insects, or needles)
- Fear that causes a lot of distress and interferes with normal activities

Other symptoms of anxiety in children may include:

- Worrying about things before they happen
- Constant fears or concerns about family, school, friends, or activities
- Reoccurring, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) or actions (compulsions)
- Fears of embarrassment or making mistakes
- Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence

What causes anxiety?

The exact cause of anxiety disorders is unknown.

How is anxiety disorder diagnosed?

Your child's doctor will do an assessment by asking questions about your child's medical history and performing a physical exam.

How is it treated?

Severe anxiety problems in children can be treated. Early treatment can prevent future problems, such as loss of friendships and relationships, poor performance in school, and feelings of low self-esteem. Treatments may include a combination of medicine and therapy. Your child's doctor will work with your child to create a plan that works best for your child.