

Anxiety Disorders in Children and Adolescents

Anxiety disorder is characterized by a sudden feeling of panic and fear, restlessness, and uneasiness. Anxiety disorders are attributed to a combination of traumatic life events, but can also be caused by mood, genetics, or biochemical factors.

Signs & Symptoms

Anxious feelings, worries, or fears are common among children and adolescents, however, those with anxiety experience situations with an overwhelming sense of fear and dread. No amount of reassurance seems to help. A child or adolescent with anxiety might:

- Have difficulty controlling feelings of worry or fear
- Frequently be restless, wound-up, on-edge, or irritable
- Have difficulty concentrating
- Have difficulty falling or staying asleep, restlessness, or unsatisfying sleep

Types of Anxiety Disorders

There are several types of anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder and multiple different phobia related disorders. These behaviors present in the following ways:

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder-** Characterized by frequent excessive worry, for at least 6 months, about multiple things such as school, social interactions, and everyday life events or activities.
- **Panic Disorder-** Characterized by recurrent, unexpected panic attacks (sudden periods of intense fear that occur quickly and reach their peak within minutes.)
- **Phobia-related Disorders-** Characterized by intense fear of an object or situation. The most common types are social anxiety, separation anxiety and specific phobias such as fear of spiders, flying, elevators, etc.

Diagnosis & Treatment

For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not subside quickly, and can worsen over time. Diagnosing a child or adolescent with an anxiety disorder is imperative to help them learn to cope with situations that bring them worry or fear. Anxiety disorders are generally treated with psychotherapy.

If you know a child with anxiety that is causing disruption to their daily activities, please call our 24-Hour Helpline at 1.800.928.8000. We can help.

Source – National Institute of Mental Health: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>