



THE
HOUSSON CENTER
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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Anxiety In Children

When a child does not outgrow the fears and worries that are typical in young children, or when there are so many fears and worries that they interfere with school, home, or play activities, the child may be diagnosed with an **anxiety disorder**.

Statistics

- Up to 1 in 5 kids will develop anxiety disorders
- Nearly 1 in 3 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 has anxiety

Symptoms

- Feeling nervous, tense, and restless
- Finding it hard to sit still
- Having a sense of impending danger, panic, or doom
- Increased heart rate
- Sweating
- Trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry or anxiety
- Trouble sleeping
- Easily angered
- Finding it difficult to control or manage worries
- Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation)
- Feeling weak or tired
- Children may use the bathroom a lot or refuse to go to school

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Agoraphobia is a type of anxiety disorder in which one fears and often avoids places or situations that might cause them to panic and make them feel trapped, helpless or embarrassed.

Anxiety disorder due to a medical condition includes symptoms of intense anxiety or panic that are directly caused by a physical health problem.

Generalized anxiety disorder includes persistent and excessive anxiety and worry about activities or events — even ordinary, routine issues. The worry is out of proportion to the actual circumstance, and is difficult to control and affects how one feels physically. It often occurs along with other anxiety disorders or depression.

Panic disorder involves repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks). One may have feelings of impending doom, shortness of breath, chest pain, or a rapid, fluttering or pounding heart (heart palpitations). These panic attacks may lead to worrying about them happening again or avoiding situations in which they've occurred.

Selective mutism is a consistent failure of children to speak in certain situations, such as school, even when they can speak in other situations, such as at home with close family members. This can interfere with school, work and social functioning.

Separation anxiety disorder is a childhood disorder characterized by anxiety that is excessive for the child's developmental level and related to separation from parents or others who have parental roles.

Social anxiety disorder (social phobia) involves high levels of anxiety, fear and avoidance of social situations due to feelings of embarrassment, self-consciousness and concern about being judged or viewed negatively by others.

Specific phobias are characterized by major anxiety when exposed to a specific object or situation and a desire to avoid it. Phobias provoke panic attacks in some people.

Substance-induced anxiety disorder is characterized by symptoms of intense anxiety or panic that are a direct result of misusing drugs, taking medications, being exposed to a toxic substance or withdrawal from drugs.

Other specified anxiety disorder and unspecified anxiety disorder are terms for anxiety or phobias that don't meet the exact criteria for any other anxiety disorders but are significant enough to be distressing and disruptive.

Risk Factors for Children

- Trauma
- Death of someone close to them
- Moving to a new house or school, especially if those moves are frequent
- Difficulty with getting enough to eat or a safe place to live
- Parents who fight or are separated/divorced
- Bullying, abuse, or neglect
- Stress due to an illness
- Other mental health disorders
- Relatives with an anxiety disorder

Treatment

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): helps kids learn coping skills that help with calming body reactions, thinking in a different and healthier way, and facing fears and challenges in smaller steps

Medication: some examples of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are Fluoxetine (Prozac), Paroxetine (Paxil, Pexeva), Sertraline (Zoloft)

How Can I Help My Child?

- Daily exercise
- A safe, supportive environment at home and school

- Ensure they are getting lots of sleep
- Provide well-balanced meals
- Meditation techniques and exercises

Resources:

[Anxiety disorders - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic](#)

[Anxiety in Children: Causes, Symptoms & Treatment \(clevelandclinic.org\)](#)

[Anxiety and Depression in Children | CDC](#)

[Help with Anxiety in Children | Brain Balance Program \(brainbalancecenters.com\)](#)

[WorryWiseKids.org | Home](#)

[How Anxiety Affects Teenagers - Child Mind Institute](#)

[Mood Disorders: Depression and Anxiety in Teen Girls - Child Mind Institute](#)

- *Freeing Your Child From Anxiety* by Tamar E. Chansky, Ph.D
- *Breaking Free of Child Anxiety and OCD* by Eli R. Lebowitz, PhD

You may also find these podcasts from Parenting for the Present helpful!

- <https://www.parentingforthepresent.com/podcast/parenting-kids-with-anxiety-with-natasha-daniels>
- <https://www.parentingforthepresent.com/podcast/what-is-your-attachment-style-with-sarah-bren>
- <https://www.parentingforthepresent.com/podcast/c5qehwtmfjxwouk3j8yyq8vmovjkbh>

Extra Helpful Resources (Books)

- *The Whole Brain Child* by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.
- *How to Talk so Little Kids Will Listen* by Joanna Faber and Julie King
- *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- *No-Drama Discipline; The Whole-Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture your Child's Developing Mind* by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.
- *Breaking Free of Child Anxiety and OCD* by Eli R. Lebowitz, Ph.D.
- *Freeing your Child from Anxiety* by Tamar E. Chansky, Ph.D.