

# ANXIETY IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

**Anxiety is when you have feelings of fear or worry.**

It is normal for every child to have some anxiety from time to time. Many children and adolescents go through phases where they feel scared of things (like the dark or animals). The fears usually go away as they get older. Children and adolescents can feel anxiety in different ways.



Some feel anxiety about lots of things. Others might feel anxiety about one specific thing (like being separated from a parent).

When fears and worries seem extreme or get in the way of a child's school, home or social life, the child may need professional help. Problems with anxiety are common and affect about 1 in 10 children.

## What are the signs of anxiety in children and adolescents?

- Clingy behavior, fear or crying when separated from parents or family members
- Having a hard time concentrating
- Feeling very worried that something bad will happen soon or in the future
- Feeling anxious about going to school or social events
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Showing extreme fear of specific things or situations, like swimming or animals

## What are the physical symptoms children and adolescents can have with anxiety?

- Dizziness, fast pulse and fast breathing (panic)
- Feeling tired or having trouble sleeping
- Headaches
- Muscle aches and pains
- Sweating
- Upset stomach





## TIPS FOR PARENTS

### How do I support children and adolescents with anxiety?

**Encourage them to face their fears.** Avoiding what scares them might make your child feel better right now, but it makes anxiety worse over time. Tell your child you know they can handle it. Let them build confidence by facing their fear one step at a time. This should be a slow process. They don't have to face their fears all at once.

**Focus on the positive.** Ask your child to tell you about the best part of their day. Celebrate successes and achievements. Try to help them stay focused on the positive parts of daily life.

**Help your child understand their feelings.** Talk with them about what happens emotionally and physically when they feel anxious, so they understand what's going on.

**Let them talk.** Tell your child they can come to you to talk about their fears and worries. Listening to them can help them feel safe and understood.

**Set an example.** Show your child how you handle everyday anxieties and worries. If you feel anxious, talk about what you will do to make yourself feel better. Children are sensitive to their parents' moods. If you stay relaxed, you can help them relax.

**Don't try to get rid of the anxiety.** Let your child go through it so they can learn to cope. In time, their anxiety will get better.

### When should we seek help?

**Talk to your child's doctor.** If your child struggles with extreme anxiety, talk to their doctor. There are many treatment options that help manage anxiety issues in children, including therapy and medicine.

**Your child may need help right away.** If you hear your child talk about harming themselves or others, don't wait. Call 911 or take them to an emergency department to get care right away.



## TIPS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

### How do I manage my anxiety?

- **Avoid caffeine.** It can make you feel more anxious.
- **Breathe.** When you feel scared or anxious, close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths.
- **Encourage yourself.** You are your own best cheerleader. Think positive thoughts like, “I can,” “I’ll try” and “I’ve got this.”
- **Exercise.** Go for a walk, play a sport you enjoy or dance to your favorite music. Exercise helps your body relax and puts you in a good mood.
- **Focus on a happy place.** Think about a place that makes you feel safe and happy. Picture it in your mind as if you’re there.
- **Relax your muscles.** Anxiety can make your body feel tense or clenched. Focus on relaxing each muscle, one at a time.

## Where can I find online resources for more support?



### [Anxiety in Children – English](#)

*American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*



### [Anxiety and Depression in Children – English](#)

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*



### [Help Your Child Manage Anxiety: Tips for Home & School – English](#)

*American Academy of Pediatrics*



### [Help Your Child Manage Anxiety: Tips for Home & School – Spanish](#)

*American Academy of Pediatrics*