

Fast Facts

- Fear and anxiety are a normal part of growing up, but they should not interfere with your child's daily activities.
- Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health problems in children and teens.
- Children and teens with anxiety experience severe and persistent distress that interferes with their daily functioning; often these disorders are under-diagnosed.
- You might describe your child as a "worrier."
- Children and teens will often report physical complaints or describe "feeling sick" (e.g. stomach pain, headaches, chest pain, and fatigue).
- Many times, children with anxiety also are having problems with paying attention/staying focused at school; they may have problems being "moody."
- Many times, healthcare providers will mistake anxiety symptoms for attention deficit symptoms.

Common Signs of Anxiety for Kids and Teens:

Physical	Behavioral	Thoughts
Restlessness and irritability (very common in younger children)	Escape/avoidant behaviors	Worry about "what ifs..."
Headaches	Crying	Always thinking something terrible will happen
Stomachaches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea	Clinging to/fear of separating from parents	Unreasonable, rigid thinking
Feeling tired	Speaking in a soft voice	
Palpitations, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure	Variations in speech patterns	
Hyperventilation/shortness of breath	Nail-biting	
Muscle tension	Thumb-sucking	
Difficulty sleeping	Always "checking out" surroundings	
Dizziness, tingling fingers, weakness	Freezing	
Tremors	Regression (bedwetting, temper tantrums)	

Medical Problems That Mimic Anxiety Symptoms

- Low blood sugar
- Thyroid problems
- Seizures
- Irregular heart beat
- Migraine headaches
- Breathing problems

Medications/Drugs That May Cause Anxiety Symptoms

- Caffeine
- Nicotine
- Antihistamines (Benadryl)
- Medications for asthma
- Marijuana
- Nasal decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine
- Stimulant medication (e.g., Ritalin)
- Street drugs (e.g., cocaine)
- Steroids
- Prescribed medications to treat anxiety, when started, can cause effects that mimic anxiety symptoms, but these symptoms often subside after a few days.

Treatment

- Talk to your primary care provider if you have concerns; describe what you are noticing about your child.
- Ask your primary care provider for things to read or Web sites to visit to learn more about your child's symptoms.
- Therapy might be recommended to help treat your child's symptoms. It could involve individual, group, or family work.
- Consider what could be changed at home or in school to help your child deal with his or her worries (e.g., set a regular bedtime routine or think about which activities are stressful for your child and think about ways to handle them differently).
- Medication is often recommended as an alternative treatment if symptoms are disturbing your child's day-to-day activities. Your provider may recommend a class of medicines called "**SSRIs**, short for *Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors*."
 - Be sure to ask:
 - What symptoms will the medication treat?
 - How long will my child have to take this medication?
 - How much medication will my child have to take, and how many times a day will he/she have to take it?
 - How often will we see and/or talk to you about how my child is doing on the medication?
 - What happens if my child misses a dose of medication?
 - How do we stop the medication?