

Anxiety and depression in children

Anxiety

A healthcare provider may diagnose a child with an anxiety disorder:¹

- When a child does not outgrow the fears and worries typical in young children (e.g., separation anxiety if away from family)
- When there are so many fears and worries that they interfere with:
 - Home
 - Play activities
 - School

Different types of anxiety disorders include:

- Being very afraid when away from parents/family (separation anxiety)
- Being very afraid of school and other places where there are people (social anxiety)
- Being very worried about the future and about bad things happening (general anxiety)
- Having extreme fear about a specific thing or situation, such as dogs, insects, or going to the doctor (phobias)
- Having repeated episodes of sudden, unexpected, intense fear that come with symptoms like heart pounding, having trouble breathing, or feeling dizzy, shaky, or sweaty (panic disorder)



Depression

A healthcare provider may diagnose a child as having depression if the child:

- Feels sad or uninterested in things that they used to enjoy
- Feel helpless or hopeless in situations they can change
- Examples of behaviors often seen in children with depression include:
 - Being tired and sluggish or tense and restless a lot of the time
 - Eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
 - Feeling sad, hopeless, or irritable a lot of the time
 - Feeling worthless, useless, or guilty

- Having a hard time paying attention
- Not wanting to do or enjoy doing fun things
- Showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior
- Sleeping a lot more or a lot less than normal
- Thinking about suicide or planning for suicide

Some children:

- May make trouble or act unmotivated
- May not appear sad
- May not talk about their helpless and hopeless thoughts

Factors

Many factors may play a role in a child developing anxiety and/or depression. These factors can include biology, temperament, and if the child:

- Experiences trauma or stress
- Is maltreated
- Is bullied or rejected by other children
- Has parents who have anxiety and/or depression

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Treatment

Treatment for anxiety and depression typically includes:

- Talking with a healthcare provider such as the child's primary care provider, or a mental health specialist, about getting an evaluation
- Evaluating the child to get the best diagnosis and treatment
- Deciding if the child may benefit from medication and/or therapy
- Managing symptoms

Being healthy:

- Is important for all children
- Can be especially important for children with depression or anxiety
- Can play a role in managing symptoms of depression or anxiety
- Can include:
 - Having a healthy eating plan centered on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (e.g., beans, peas, and lentils), lean protein sources, and nuts and seeds
 - Participating in physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day
 - Getting the recommended amount of sleep (based on age) every night
 - Practicing mindfulness or relaxation techniques

Source

1. "Anxiety and Depression in Children," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last accessed October 19, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html>.

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العربية (Arabic): اتصل برقم الهاتف أعلاه للحصول على خدمات المساعدة اللغوية المجانية.