

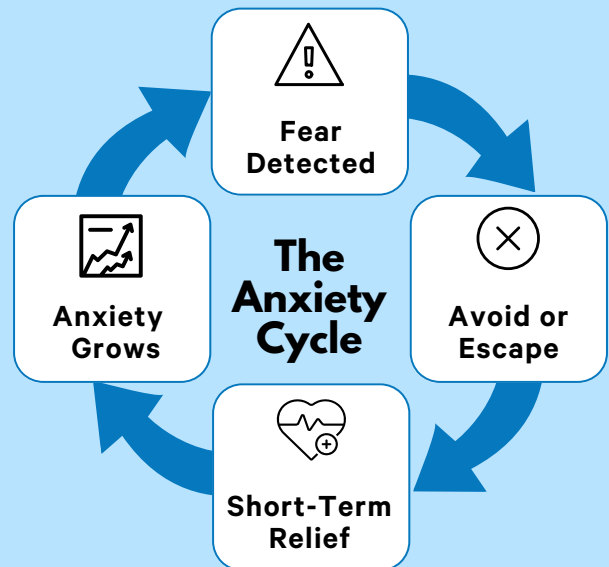
Pediatric Anxiety Explained

Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety in Kids

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is our bodies' way of responding to something that we think might hurt us. Having small amounts of anxiety is good because it helps our bodies react to things around us and keep us safe. But too much anxiety can start to cause problems in our life. Anxiety causes us to avoid the feared situation and the more we avoid feared situations, the stronger our anxiety becomes.

Too much anxiety can make it hard for us to do everyday things. If anxiety starts getting in the way of doing work, life, or play, it may be time to get help. Read the common symptoms of anxiety below to see if you are having significant anxiety symptoms.



Common Types of Anxiety

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

An excessive amount of worry in a lot of different settings that is hard to "turn off".

Social Anxiety

Excessive fear about being embarrassed or evaluated by others. (e.g., public speaking, meeting new people).

Specific Phobia

Fear about a specific thing (e.g., spiders, small spaces).

Separation Anxiety

Fear about being separated from home or from caregivers.

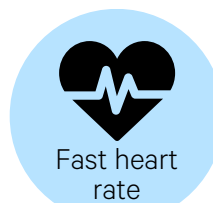
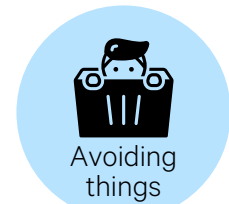
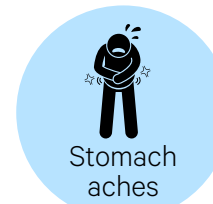
Panic Disorder

Fear that causes physical symptoms, like heart racing, shortness of breath, and chest tightening.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Intrusive, unwanted thoughts that lead to repetitive behaviors (e.g., hand washing, counting).

Common Anxiety Symptoms



Brain Basics, Anxiety for Kids

By Kids Helpline



Anxiety Explained SEL Sketches

By SEL Sketches



Anxiety Disorders

By Kids Health



Anxiety and Depression in Children

By CDC

Pediatric Anxiety Explained

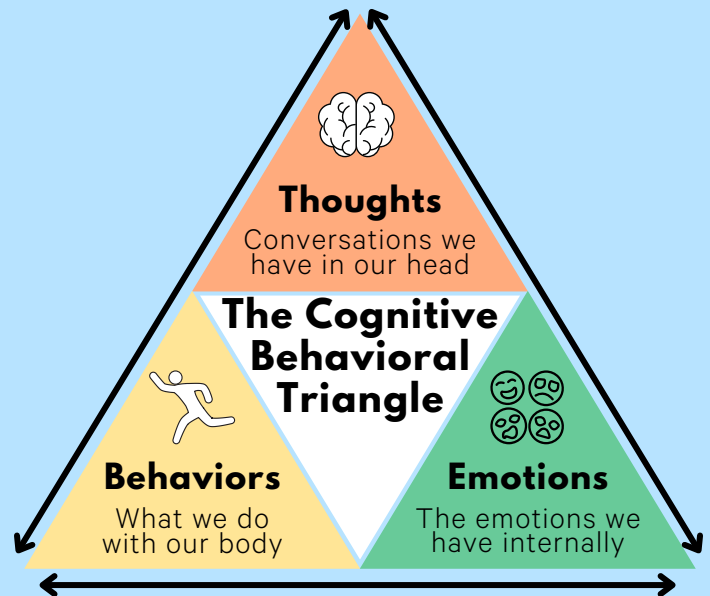
Helping Kids Cope with Anxiety

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

The evidence-based treatment for anxiety is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, also known as CBT. CBT focus on the mind-body connection and focuses on the relation between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. CBT targets:

- Negative cognitions by challenging thoughts
- Behaviors by increasing the frequency of enjoyable activities and coping strategies
- Improving the mind-body connection through identification of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors

CBT is an active treatment meaning you and your child will be learning skills and practicing these skills between each therapy session.



Ways to Cope at Home

Distraction

Attention often makes anxiety symptoms grow. By directing attention to something other than anxiety, we can reduce the intensity of symptoms. Other people can support you in using distraction by helping identify alternative activities you can engage in as a way to reduce your focus on anxiety symptoms. It can be helpful to develop a list of preferred distraction activities you can engage in.

Challenge Negative Thoughts

Sometimes our thoughts make us feel worse. You can challenge unhelpful, anxious thoughts to make them healthier. Ask yourself "Is this thought true?". If the answer is no, try to replace it with a helpful thought like, "I can do hard things." The more times you replace unhelpful thoughts with coping thoughts, the easier this becomes for your brain.

Relaxation

Sometimes when we are anxious, our bodies get tight or tense. Practicing relaxation techniques can help reduce anxiety symptoms. Here are some relaxation strategies to try:

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
- Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Mental Imagery

How to Find a Therapist

Talk to your doctor to get info on local mental health providers in your area or contact your insurance company to get a list of local providers who accept your insurance.

PsychologyToday.com also has a search tool to find mental health providers in your area.

- Enter your zip code or state
- Search by criteria using the left filter window (CBT, Anxiety)

Apps to Practice



HeadSpace



MindShift



Smiling Mind

Helpful Websites

[KidsHealth.org](https://www.kidshealth.org)

[AnxietyCanada.com](https://www.anxietycanada.com)

[WorryWiseKids.org](https://www.worrywisekids.org)

[Brave-Online.com](https://www.brave-online.com)