

— Anxiety —

It is normal to feel fearful, worried, or anxious. A person may feel anxious before taking an exam or walking down a dark sidewalk, which is normal and useful. Normal, useful anxiety helps people feel more alert or careful. The worry or anxiety typically lessens or goes away once the person is out of the situation that caused the anxiety. However, for some children and adolescents the worry does not go away and it gets worse over time. When anxiety becomes hard to control, fears become extreme, worries are present on most days, and your child starts to avoid scary situations or doing normal things, it may be a sign of an anxiety disorder.

You will know that it is time to talk with your child's doctor if your child's fears:

- ▶ Seem extreme or last past the normal age
- ▶ Cause your child to be very upset or have tantrums
- ▶ Keep your child from doing things - like going to school, sleeping alone, or being apart from you
- ▶ Cause physical symptoms (like stomach aches, headaches, or racing heart) or your child feels breathless, sick, or dizzy

What can parents do at home to help?

- ▶ Talk to your child about their fears and worries, let them know it is okay to feel anxiety and that you are available to listen.
- ▶ Provide comfort and reassurance, being kind and reminding your child that they are safe.
- ▶ Encourage your child to face their fears in a safe and comfortable way. Do not allow your child to avoid situations that are scary and cause anxiety, this teaches them that their fears are realistic and worth avoiding
- ▶ Be a positive role model, show your child that fears and worries can be managed in healthy ways

