

How to Care for Your Child with Anxiety Disorder

This leaflet will provide you with information about anxiety disorders, its causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and home care advice.



What is an Anxiety Disorder?

- Feeling nervous, tense or worrying are normal emotions a child can have during various stages of their growth and development.
- Some children can have frequent feelings of nervousness, sometimes irrational, to an extent, that it can interfere with their day to day behavior.
- Different children demonstrate different symptoms that can vary in intensity along the spectrum of what is known as an anxiety disorder.
- Anxiety disorder is never a sign of the child's weakness or poor parenting.

What are the causes of Anxiety Disorder?

- Some children can just pick up anxiety from being around anxious people.
- Several different stressful events might be a bit too much for them to cope with.
- Events that can cause anxiety include examples like:
 - o death of a close friend or relative
 - o conflicts at home
 - o frequent changes in home or school
 - o disabilities
 - o separation of parents
 - o victim of abuse
 - o bullying

What are the symptoms of Anxiety Disorder?

- Feeling nervous, tense or moody
- Heart pounding
- Breathing very quickly
- Sweating
- Headache
- Sleeping difficulty
- Difficulty in concentration
- Avoidance
- Tingling of hands and feet if anxiety comes on strong

How is an anxiety disorder diagnosed?

- The clinician looking after your child may ask you and your child few questions that help understand their symptoms.
- Based on the conversation the clinician will let you know whether the symptoms are consistent with anxiety disorder.
- Your child does not need any blood test to confirm the diagnosis. Although on some a clinician may ask to do some tests to rule out any other conditions or disease that might explain the symptoms.

How is anxiety disorder treated?

- Your child may be referred to a psychiatrist or psychologist (specialized clinician in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness) at the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) at Sidra.
- Learning that your child needs CAMHS support can seem upsetting at first. Don't let this mislead you; caring for a child's mind and emotions is an important part of healthcare.
- In the case of school-based problems, including concerns about academic achievements, help should be requested from the appropriate professionals such as schools' psychologists/counsellors, social worker and school nurses before the referral is made to CAMHS services.

Home care advice

- If your child is experiencing symptoms of anxiety, talk and explore their worries.
- Ensuring a supportive network of friends and family members is important.
- Help your child talk to you about their feelings.
- Listen and reassure them that you understand their feelings.
- Ensure you stay calm during an episode of strong anxiety.
- During an episode of strong anxiety your child may start breathing very fast. If that happens encourage them to slow down their breathing, in through the nose and out through the mouth.
- Having a balanced diet, sleeping well and being physically active can improve your child's physical and mental health.

When should I seek medical advice?

- If your child's anxiety is getting worse or affecting every day activities, it's time to talk to your child doctor.
- You may be referred to a therapist who can help your child learn better ways to overcome anxiety

Go to the Emergency Department if your child:

- In a few situations, you may need to take your child to the nearest Paediatric Emergency Centre
- If your child complains of heart beating very fast - to check if this is above the acceptable limits or if this is other than just the anxiety itself.
- If your child also suffers from lung conditions such as asthma, and breathing difficulty to check whether this is due the problem in the lungs.
- If your child faints and if you are unsure if this is due to anxiety.