



Supporting children and young people with anxiety

It is not surprising that the Coronavirus epidemic is causing increased levels of anxiety in children and young people, particularly those who already struggle with their own mental health.

In this resource we look at different types of anxiety, signs and symptoms to look out for and ways to support children if they are experiencing anxiety.



Types of anxiety

Anxiety disorders are the most commonly diagnosed mental health condition.

Types of anxiety disorders include:

- Phobias
 - Panic disorder
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder
 - Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
 - Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)
- Triggers for anxiety

Some young people will experience anxiety related to specific issues or situations such as attending school, going on holiday or attending medical appointments.

Other triggers include:

- Neglect and/or abuse
- losing a parent/carer
- being bullied
- being socially excluded
- homelessness/poverty
- being under pressure e.g. school
- puberty.

Signs and symptoms of anxiety

When a young person is feeling anxious there are a number of signs and symptoms which they may experience both physically and psychologically.

Physical symptoms include:

- nausea (feeling sick)
- tense muscles and headaches
- pins and needles
- feeling light-headed or dizzy
- breathing faster which may lead to a panic attack
- feeling sweaty or hot
- increased heart rate
- difficulty sleeping
- butterflies in the stomach.

What to do if you're anxious about Coronavirus

YoungMinds have written a **blog** with advice for young people



Mental Health Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak



The World Health Organisation has published a **list of mental health considerations** developed by their Mental Health Department as support for mental and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Avoid watching, reading or listening to news that cause you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts. Gather information at regular intervals, from WHO website and local health authorities' platforms, in order to help you distinguish facts from rumours.

Coronavirus: How to talk about it with children

Read more advice
on the **Tes website**



Psychological symptoms include:

- feeling tense or nervous
- having a sense of dread, or fearing the worst
- feeling like other people are looking at you
- dwelling on negative experiences
- thinking over a situation lots of times.

Signs to look out for:

- increase in crying
- complaining of tummy ache
- not eating properly
- getting angry
- finding it hard to concentrate
- worrying
- having negative thoughts
- being clingy.

Supporting children and young people with anxiety

There are a number of ways that children and young people can be supported to reduce their anxiety. Helping them to understand what anxiety is and explaining how they might be feeling and why, will help them to deal with it. Anyone suffering with anxiety should be encouraged to learn self-help strategies.

This can include:

- regular exercise
- encourage a healthy lifestyle
- listening to music
- keep a diary
- talking to a friend or peer mentor
- encourage positive thinking
- cutting down on the amount of alcohol and caffeine consumed
- using distraction techniques such as fidget toys or colouring books
- using breathing exercises to help to manage their anxiety.



- Help children find positive ways to express disturbing feelings such as fear and sadness. Every child has his/her own way to express emotions. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing, and drawing can facilitate this process. Children feel relieved if they can express and communicate their disturbing feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible, especially if children are confined to home. Provide engaging age appropriate activities for children. As much as possible, encourage children to continue

to play and socialize with others, even if only within the family when advised to restrict social contact.

- During times of stress and crisis, it is common for children to seek more attachment and be more demanding on parents. Discuss the COVID-19 with your children in honest and age appropriate information. If your children have concerns, addressing those together may ease their anxiety. Children will observe adults' behaviours and emotions for cues on how to manage their own emotions during difficult times.

Helpful resources

Ways to access support

Anxiety UK

Telephone: 03444 775 774

Email: support@anxietyuk.org.uk

Live Chat Advisory Service:

 Available during office hours,
via the website.

Text: 07537 416 905

Services are available Monday – Friday
9.30am – 5.30pm (excluding bank holidays)

Childline

0800 1111

Young Minds Crisis Messenger

Text YM to 85258

The Mix

Freephone: 0808 808 4994

(4pm – 11pm daily)

Further information

-  **Anxiety UK**
-  **Mental Health Foundation**
-  **Mind**
-  **YoungMinds**
-  **NHS Conditions**
-  **No Panic**
-  **Health for teens**
-  **Health for Kids**

