

Anxiety

Fears and worries can be common and developmentally appropriate in childhood.

Excessive fear of anticipated dangers or problems, accompanied by an intense feeling, or physical symptoms may be signs of an underlying anxiety disorder if they are:

- Intense
- Frequent
- Persist over long periods of time
- Inappropriate for the child's age
- Interfere with the child's life



The CDC estimates that **9.4%** or approximately **5.8 million** children in the U.S. have diagnosable anxiety disorder

Anxiety is the most common mental health condition for both children and adults. Anxiety can be difficult to recognize because it can manifest in different ways depending on the child's age. Younger children tend to have more physical symptoms. General signs and symptoms of anxiety may include:

Early Childhood

- Frequent crying
- Excessive clinginess
- Sleep disturbance
- Stomach aches/headaches
- School avoidance
- Difficulty separating from parent

School-Age

- Perfectionism
- Self-doubt
- Excessive worries
- Withdrawing socially
- School avoidance
- Fear of harm
- Preoccupation with "what if"
- Hyperactivity
- Stomach aches/headaches
 Sleep disturbance

Adolescence

- Irritability
- Poor concentration
- Avoiding situations
- Poor school performance
- Sleep disturbance
- Increased sensitivity to criticism
- Substance use
- Unhealthy coping strategies

Anxiety engages our **fight**, **flight** or **freeze** system and leads to physical and mental symptoms. This can cause avoidance, fleeing from stress, verbal and physical aggression and feeling emotionally or physically stuck.



Protective Factors

Having family meals together Feeling connected to school/community Resilience Problem-solving skills Sense of purpose **Treatment Options**

Therapy alone Medication alone Combination of both

Getting help early is better. Never worry alone. Consult your pediatrician.

Frequency Intensity Duration

If you notice changes in the frequency, intensity and duration of your child's behavior or mood, it's important to let your pediatrician know. List questions and concerns to share with your pediatrician:

How often is it happening? How intense is it? How long does it last?

Are these behaviors impacting your child in school, at home and with friends? Include your child's medications and family mental health history.



Questions/Concerns

If your child is experiencing a mental health crisis or suicidal thoughts, call or text **988**, Connecticut's Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

988 offers 24/7/365 access to trained staff who can help in mental health and substance use crises, provide referrals to resources and perform warm transfers to Mobile Crisis Intervention Services or emergency services including Urgent Crisis Centers in your community.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS

If your child is experiencing a life-threatening situation

Dial 911 immediately





Attention Health Care Provider:

If you have questions or need clinical guidance, **ACCESS Mental Health** is FREE and available to you.

Call us: Monday-Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Hartford Hospital 855.561.7135

Wheeler Clinic, Inc. 855.631.9835

Yale Child Study Center 844.751.8955