

Adolescent Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal bodily reaction to perceived threats or important events. It alerts our body to deal with the threat and keeps us safe. Anxiety is the most common psychological problem for young people. Even though their worries may seem insignificant from an adult's perspective, they are genuinely distressing for the young person.

Prevalence

Approximately 3% of Canadian children or youth experience an anxiety disorder.

Symptoms

Although everyone can experience a different combination of symptoms, the following experiences are common for adolescents with anxiety:

Physical Reactions: Stomach aches, headaches, trembling, or feeling dizzy.

Behaviour Changes: Refusing to go to school, participating in activities, problems concentrating, difficulty sleeping well, and others.

Emotional Reactivity: Becoming extremely upset when separated from parents, caregivers or over minor issues or conflicts. Experiencing panic attacks more than usual.

Negative or "Crooked" Thoughts: Mistrusting others, always wanting to be perfect or being afraid of making mistakes.

Excess & Extreme Worry: Constant worry about grades, something bad happening to loved ones or obsession with death.

Treatments That Work

Psychotherapy: Cognitive Behavioural, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Family Therapy, Group Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT), Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), Play Therapy, Psychodynamic Psychotherapy, and Supportive Therapy.

Parent and family education: Families can learn healthy coping behaviours at home.

Self-care strategies: Following healthy routines and coping skills like eating and sleeping well, exercising, and taking time to relax.

Medication: Your physician can help you to learn more about medication options.

Resources - Anxiety Canada: [Anxiety in youth](#)

Canadian Mental Health Association: [Children, Youth and Anxiety](#)

Kids' Help Phone: [How to cope with panic and anxiety](#)