

Coping With Anxiety, Teen

Anxiety is the feeling of nervousness or worry that you might experience when faced with a stressful event, like a test or a big sports game. Occasional stress and anxiety caused by work, school, relationships, or decision-making is a normal part of life, and it can be managed through certain lifestyle habits.

However, some people may experience anxiety:

- Without a specific trigger.
- For long periods of time.
- That causes physical problems over time.
- That is far more intense than typical stress.

When these feelings become overwhelming and interfere with daily activities and relationships, it may indicate an anxiety disorder. If you receive a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder, your health care provider will tell you which type of anxiety you have and the possible treatments to help.

How can anxiety affect me?

Anxiety may make you feel uncomfortable. When you are faced with something exciting or potentially dangerous, your body responds in a way that prepares it to fight or run away. This response, called “fight or flight,” is also a normal response to stress. When your brain initiates the fight and flight response, it tells your body to get the blood moving and prepare for the demands of the expected challenge. When this happens, you may experience:

- A faster than usual heart rate.
- Blood flowing to your big muscles
- A feeling of tension and focus.

In some situations, such as during a big game or performance, this response a good thing and can help you perform better. However, in most situations, this response is not helpful. When the fight and flight response lasts for hours or days, it may cause:

- Tiredness or exhaustion.
- Sleep problems.
- Upset stomach or nausea.
- Headache.
- Feelings of depression.

Long-term anxiety may also cause you to:

- Think negative thoughts about yourself.
- Experience problems and conflicts in relationships.
- Distance yourself from friends, family, and activities you enjoy.
- Perform poorly in school, sports, work or extracurricular activities.

What are things that I can do to deal with anxiety?

When you experience anxiety, you can take steps to help manage it:

- Talk with a trusted friend or family member about your thoughts and feelings. Identify two or three people who you think might help.

- Find an activity that helps calm you down, such as:
 - Deep breathing.
 - Listening to music.
 - Taking a walk.
 - Exercising.
 - Playing sports for fun.
 - Playing an instrument.
 - Singing.
 - Writing in a dairy.
 - Drawing.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Read a good book.
- Spend time with friends.

What should I do if my anxiety gets worse?

If these self-calming methods are not working or if your anxiety gets worse, you should get help from a health care provider. Talking with your health care provider or a mental health counselor is not a sign of weakness. Certain types of counseling can be very helpful in treating anxiety. A counseling professional can assess what other types of treatments could be most helpful for you. Other treatments include:



- Talk therapy.
- Medicines.
- Biofeedback.
- Meditation.
- Yoga.

Talk with your health care provider or counselor about what treatment options are right for you.

Where can I get support?

You may find that joining a support group helps you deal with your anxiety. Resources for locating counselors or support groups in your area are available from the following sources:

- Mental Health America: www.mentalhealthamerica.net
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA): www.adaa.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): www.nami.org

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.