

# Teens and Anxiety

Something isn't quite right. You're not sure what it is, but you can feel it. Maybe you just haven't been yourself lately or you're worried about things that never used to bother you. Maybe you're scared about the future or that you don't have enough friends. These and other thoughts nag at you when you should be focused on things like family, school, and activities that make you happy.

If this sounds like what you're going through, you may have anxiety.

## What is Anxiety?

The first thing to know about anxiety is that there's nothing wrong with you. Feeling anxious is very common. Everyone has worries from time to time. But when these worries take over your thoughts for most of the day, it may be time to ask for help.

You may think about anxiety as panic attacks, shaky knees, or a racing heart. The truth is that anxiety is more than that. It can also be:

- Feeling like something bad is going to happen
- Feeling weak or tired
- Having trouble concentrating or thinking
- Having a hard time with everyday situations
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having an upset stomach
- Wanting to avoid people or things that make you worried

Everyone's anxiety is different. You may feel only some of these things or have different worries. What matters is that you can get help for your anxiety.

## How is Anxiety Treated?

Talking about anxiety can cause, well, more anxiety. It's not always easy to talk about what's bothering you.

You may not feel this way right now, but telling someone about your anxiety is a sign of strength. It's OK to admit you're anxious!

If you . . .

- Feel like you're worrying too much
- Feel like your anxiety is interfering with school or work
- Feel like your anxiety is hard to control
- Feel depressed, "down," or "blue" more often than not for at least two weeks
- Are using drugs or alcohol to deal with your feelings

. . . then it may be time to get help. Start by talking to someone you trust. This might be a friend, parent, teacher, or doctor. Sometimes just talking to someone can be helpful. You can ask yourself these questions to understand your stress and anxiety better.



## Which is it?

### Everyday Anxiety

- Worry about a test, a romantic breakup, or other life events.
- Feeling shy or embarrassed in awkward social situations.
- Having a bad day from time to time.

### Troublesome Anxiety

- Constant worry every day for little or no reason.
- Avoiding going out for fear of being judged or embarrassed.
- Feeling like things are never going to get better.

Depending on how much anxiety you're feeling, your doctor may want you to see a counselor or therapist. This will give you a safe place to talk about your fears and worries. A mental health professional can also give you skills to help control your anxiety.

Some people find that medication helps with their anxiety. Any medication for anxiety has to come from your doctor. They'll have an idea of what may or may not work for you.

## Things You Can Do Now

While you wait to see a doctor or other medical professional, there are ways to manage your anxiety. Here are some ideas:

- Try positive self-talk. If you find yourself having a negative thought, see if there's a way to turn it around. Remind yourself that you won't feel this way forever.

- Take time for yourself. Whether it's doing something you love or just having some quiet time. You can also try meditation, prayer, or listening to music.
- Eat healthy and exercise. Taking care of your body can be good for your mental health too. Try not to skip meals or eat more than usual. Drink plenty of water. Stay active.
- Make a list of things you can and can't control. Focus on the things you can control. If you start thinking about things that are out of your control try to re-focus your thoughts on what you can control.
- Don't use drugs or alcohol. While alcohol and drugs may make you feel better in the short term, they can increase negative feelings over time.
- Connect with a friend. Share how you are dealing with stress and anxiety. They may be dealing with something similar and have ideas to share.

Having anxiety doesn't mean you have to feel worried all the time. With the right kind of help, you can get your anxiety under control.

If you ever think about hurting yourself or others, you should get help right away. Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or chat at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat>. Someone will be able to help you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Sources: American Psychiatric Association, Anxiety and Depression Association of America, National Institute of Mental Health, Mayo Clinic