

Recognizing and Managing Anxiety in Young Children

While all children have their share of concerns, some struggle with high levels of stress and persistent anxiety. Anxiety can be everything from minor phobias, like a fear of dogs, to generalized anxiety, which is when children worry about everything that could go wrong.

- In toddlers and preschoolers, anxiety and panic often erupts into tantrums.
- Slightly older children may act out or withdraw as a way to cover up fear and anxiety.

High levels of anxiety and fear don't just take an emotional toll, they can also effect children physically. Physical symptoms can include: restlessness, fatigue, back pain, sweating, headaches and/ or stomachaches.

Anxious Behavior- What's Normal and What's Worrisome?

It's perfectly okay when children . . . <ul style="list-style-type: none">•worry about an upcoming test•want to be tucked in at night•are cautious in new situations, but warm up eventually•keep an eye out for things outside like bees or dogs	It may be a red flag if children. . . <ul style="list-style-type: none">•vomit, lose sleep, or cry from stress•wind up in your bed every night•refuse to leave your side or to try new situations•need to be coaxed outside because they're afraid
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Helping Your Child Cope

1. **Keep Calm:** Children often take cues from their parents as to how to react to a situation.
2. **Be Empathetic.** Explain that anxiety is normal, then provide safe and supportive opportunities for children to talk about and confront their fears
3. **Take Small Steps:** Break down challenges your child is facing into small and manageable steps. For example, if your child is afraid to sleep alone, check in every few minutes before they sleep. Over time, slowly extending the time between check-ins over time

If you would like additional support or your child's anxiety persists, then consult with a professional such as your family doctor or a social service agency in your community.

