

Anxiety Disorders in Children and Young People

What is it?

An anxiety disorder is when we often feel very anxious. This can be anxious about something specific or feeling anxious all the time. Sometimes a person will also have panic attacks. A panic attack is when you feel intense anxiety over a short period of time. Panic attacks can feel overwhelming.

To be diagnosed, the anxiety has to be severe enough that it is affecting the person's ability to function (such as physically, socially, academically, etc.)

Types of anxiety disorders

- **Agoraphobia:** Excessive fear of situations in which there is no easy escape or access to help (e.g. wide open spaces, away from home, on public transport, etc)
- **Generalised Anxiety Disorder:** Excessive fear or anxiety about many things that is difficult for the person to control
- **Panic Disorder:** Repeated unexpected panic attacks. Fear of further attacks and attempts to avoid further attacks
- **Selective Mutism:** Failure to speak in certain situations when speech is expected (but able to speak in other situations)
- **Separation Anxiety Disorder:** Excessive fear of separation from home or caregivers (either intentionally or by accident)
- **Social Anxiety Disorder:** Marked fear or anxiety about one or more social situations (must include anxiety in peer settings for children)
- **Specific Phobia:** Excessive fear of a specific object or situation which is then actively avoided or, if needed, tolerated with high levels of distress

What will my GP do?

Your GP may give you information about:

Your GP may refer your child for treatment. Mild to moderate anxiety in children can be treated effectively with early intervention. A referral does not mean that your child is seriously mentally unwell.

Your GP may also:

- Provide strategies to help manage your child's anxiety
- Refer to a specialist service if the anxiety is severe

Your GP will want your child to come back so they can check how the anxiety is improving. If it is not improving, your GP may discuss other options to assist.

What questions should I ask my doctor?

There's a lot going through your mind, and it can be easy to forget the questions you want to ask your GP. Here's a list of questions you may wish to ask:

- *What can I do to help my child now?*
- *What can I do to help my child over time?*
- *When should I make another appointment?*
- *How quickly can I expect results?*
- *What happens if my child gets worse?*



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What can I do?

It is important to support your child in learning how to manage their anxiety. Treatment can often take time. Some of the things that you can do include:

- Getting treatment early as it helps prevent the anxiety getting worse
- Try not to get frustrated when your child is anxious. It may not make sense to you but their brain is telling them that they are unsafe.
- Look after yourself – you are the child’s main support and it is easy to forget to maintain good self-care.

What supports are available?

Public health and other free services

The [Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service \(ICAMHS\)](#) provides specialist treatment for children and young people up to 18 years of age. Talk to your GP about this service.

The [Primary and Community Health Psychology Service](#) provides free psychological assessment and treatment for children up to 12 years. Contact **8788 4200** and ask to speak to the psychology intake worker.

The [SWSLHD Youth Health Service](#) provides free counselling to youth aged 12-21 years. Contact one of their centres and ask to speak to their intake worker:

- [The Corner Youth Health Service \(Bankstown\)](#)..... 9726 8633
- [The Fairfield Liverpool Youth Health Team \(FLYHT\)](#)..... 8717 1717
- [Traxside \(Campbelltown\)](#) 4625 2525

[Headspace](#) provides bulk-billed counselling services for young people aged 12-25. Contact one of their centres to make an appointment:

- Bankstown 9393 9669
- Liverpool 8785 3200
- Macarthur 4627 9089

[South Western Sydney PHN Mental Health Services](#) provide two services to improve access to mental health services for children and young people. Star4kids is for children aged 3-12 years and You In Mind is for young people over the age of 12 years. Both services include criteria to be met and a GP referral. Speak to your GP about this service and whether a referral would be beneficial.

The [Raising Healthy Minds App](#) is a free app you can tailor to your child, family and interests. It answers your questions about child wellbeing and shares practical tips for your day-to-day family life.

Private options

There are many private specialist and allied health providers that can treat child anxiety. Speak to your GP about rebates for treatment.

Where can I learn more?

- Bullying No Way – for children and parents: bullyingnoway.gov.au
- Kids Help Line:..... kidshelpline.com.au
- Raising Children Network: raisingchildren.net.au
- South Western Sydney Local Health District Mental Health Services: ... [Bankstown](#)
[Liverpool & Fairfield](#)
[Campbelltown, Camden & Wollondilly](#)
[Wingecarribee](#)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN’s Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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