

Adolescent Anxiety

Anxiety is the most common psychological problem for young people. Although anxiety is a typical bodily reaction to perceived threats or important events, it is an issue when experienced without actual threats to our safety. Adolescent worries, which may seem insignificant from an adult perspective, can be genuinely distressing, and anxiety-provoking, for youth.

Prevalence

Approximately 3% of Canadian youth experience an anxiety disorder; far more struggle with anxiety issues and concerns.

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 or participate in activities, problems concentrating, difficulty sleeping well, and other changes.

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

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

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

Treatments That Work

Psychotherapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, and other psychotherapies are effective in managing anxiety symptoms by identifying thoughts that cause anxiety and facing fears with different coping strategies.

Parent and family education

Families can learn healthy coping behaviours for use at home.

Self-care strategies

Following healthy routines and coping skills like eating and sleeping well, exercising, and taking out 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](#)