

Anxiety in Children & Teens

What is Anxiety?

It can be normal for everyone to experience some anxiety as a part of life. You might feel anxious about a deadline at work, conflict with family or friends, moving to a new house, or other life experiences. Children also experience anxiety. They may feel anxious about taking a test, basketball tryouts or the school dance. These moments occur for everyone and stem from feelings of excitement, joy, fear or uncertainty.

When these feelings are no longer temporary and become so big that they're difficult to manage, that is a sign of an anxiety disorder. With an anxiety disorder, the anxiety gets worse over time and doesn't go away. It may grow so severe that the symptoms interfere with everyday activities and are reducing a child's quality of life.

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health disorders in children. With treatment and ongoing support, the symptoms can be significantly reduced or eliminated for most children.



Signs & Symptoms

It can be difficult for a child to understand and explain what they are feeling so it's very important for caregivers to pay close attention to behaviors. Below is a list of behaviors that may indicate a child or teen is struggling with anxiety.

- Changes in eating habits (such as eating a lot more or a lot less)
- Changes in sleeping habits (such as sleeping more, insomnia or frequent bad dreams)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Complaints of stomach or body aches that aren't due to a physical problem
- Becoming angry or irritated very easily
- Acting out more than usual, having outbursts
- Feeling restless or fidgety
- Constantly worrying or having negative thoughts
- Crying a lot more than usual
- Clingy behavior or constantly wanting to be held



Types of Anxiety Disorders

The most common types of anxiety that we diagnose and treat in the children and teens we serve include:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Phobias
- Social Anxiety
- Separation Anxiety
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Our Locations

KANSAS CITY
4300 Brenner Dr.
Kansas City, KS 66104

WICHITA
1507 W. 21st St. N.
Wichita, KS 67203

HAYS
205 E 7th St.
Hays, KS 67601

What You Can Do to Help

If you know a child who is struggling with anxiety, here are some ways you can support them:

- **Stay calm in front of them.** They are often observing how the adults around them react in new, uncertain or stressful situations.
- **Teach them ways to self-cope and problem solve** when they are in a situation that is making them anxious.
- **Don't encourage them to avoid the situations, people, places or things that give them anxiety.** While this may temporarily make them feel better, it will cause the anxiety around those fears to grow larger.
- **Help them with some anxiety soothing techniques** such as deep breathing, meditation, or other healthy activities that you know help them regulate their emotions.
- **Seek professional help.** It's important to have a physician or licensed mental health professional examine the child for an accurate assessment and diagnosis of their physical and mental health.



Contact KVC Hospitals for Support

KVC Hospitals is a network of nonprofit children's psychiatric hospitals and residential treatment centers serving youth ages 6 to 18. Each year, we give thousands of youth a safe place to heal, build resilience, and overcome struggles with behavioral and mental health challenges. Our compassionate team of psychiatric, medical and behavioral health professionals provides a nurturing and therapeutic experience along with a treatment plan tailored to meet each child's individual needs. The goal of our treatment programs is for each child to safely return home with the resources and supports in place to live a healthy and happy life in their community.

If you're concerned that a child in your care is struggling with anxiety or other mental health needs, **call KVC Hospitals at 913-890-7468.** We're available 24/7 to answer your questions.

Here's a list of additional resources you can contact for help:

- Call the child's primary care physician or your local community mental health center
- Text HOME to 741741 for 24/7 support from the Crisis Text Line
- Call the National Alliance on Mental Illness helpline at 800-950-6264, which is staffed by volunteers who have mental health conditions
- Call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255