

# Warning Signs of Anxiety in Teens and Tweens



Teens and tweens tend to worry about a lot of things. They may worry about friends, social status, grades, the future and world events. These worries usually don't last long or cause major problems. However, anxiety can become a problem when it lingers, occurs often and/or disrupts routines or goals. Here are some warnings signs of anxiety to look for in your child.

## What does your child do?

Anxiety may be more obvious in younger children who cry and cling to parents. With adolescents, anxiety may present itself in declining opportunities to talk to or interact with peers or adults. Adolescents may complain when they are the center of attention, avoid completing their school work for fear of making mistakes or avoid/refuse to attempt activities in which they are unsure of their success.

Serious anxiety problems in tweens and teens can lead to social withdrawal, sadness or irritability, and in some cases, a depressive episode.

## What does your child say?

It can be difficult to read between the few words of a teenager to determine if anxiety is at the root of their stress or avoidance. They may hint that they worry about what others think of them, or not see the point in doing an assignment if they can't complete it perfectly. They often worry about disappointing their parents, and they can become distressed in imagining huge implications on their entire future from one pop quiz.

## What does your child feel?

Even older children may complain that they feel sick or experience stomachaches or headaches. They may have changes in their sleep or appetite. They may oversaturate themselves with visual input (binging on television while texting and reading social media) or other sensory input (loud music while playing video games).

## How do I know if my child's anxiety has become problematic?

The following four questions are often useful when determining whether anxiety has made life difficult for your child. If so, your teen may need support from a therapist or mental-health provider.

- Does your child worry or ask for reassurance almost every day?
- Does your child consistently avoid certain age-appropriate situations or activities?
- Does your child frequently have stomachaches, headaches or episodes of hyperventilation?
- Does your child have daily repetitive rituals?