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Understanding and Coping with Anxiety Disorders

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(Texas Child Health Through Telemedicine)



Symptoms of Anxiety

- Anxiety disorders include disorders that share features of excessive fear and anxiety. **Fear** is the emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat, whereas **anxiety** is anticipation of future threat.
- Symptoms can include sweating, shaking, chest pain or discomfort, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, accelerated heart rate, nausea, dizziness, chills or heat sensations, restlessness, fatigues, irritability, muscle tension, difficulty concentrating, and sleep disturbance.



Types of Anxiety Disorders

- **Generalized anxiety disorder:** excessive worry and anxiety about a number of events and activities (such school, work, money, etc.).
- **Panic disorder:** experiencing recurring panic attacks at unexpected times. A person with panic disorder may live in fear of the next panic attack.
- **Phobia:** excessive fear of a specific object, situation, or activity.
- **Social anxiety disorder:** extreme fear of being judged by others in social situations.
- **Agoraphobia:** fear of being in social settings.
- **Separation anxiety disorder:** fear of being away from home or loved ones.
- **Substance/medication induced anxiety disorder:** anxiety developed during or soon after substance intoxication or withdrawal or after exposure to a medication.



Causes and Impact of Anxiety

- Experts do not know exactly what causes anxiety disorders. Several things seem to play a role, including genetics, brain biochemistry, an overactive fight-flight response, stressful life circumstances, and learned behavior.
- Chronic anxiety can lead to serious medical and mental health problems such as heart disease, depression, substance use, and even suicide. It can interfere with the ability to focus and learn causing school problems that can have lifelong impact.



Treatments of Anxiety

- The course of treatment depends on the type of anxiety disorder. Medications, therapy/counseling, or a combination of both can usually relieve troubling symptoms.
- Examples of medications that are commonly used to treat chronic anxiety include Citalopram (Celexa), Escitalopram (Lexapro), Fluoxetine (Prozac), Paroxetine (Paxil), Sertraline (Zoloft), Duloxetine (Cymbalta) and Venlafaxine (Effexor).
- Examples of therapy that are commonly used to treat chronic anxiety are Cognitive-Behavioral therapy (CBT), Cognitive-Processing therapy (CPT), Biofeedback, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), and Prolonged Exposure therapy (PE) in individual or group settings.



Treatments of Anxiety

- Coping strategies and lifestyle modifications to alleviate anxiety such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness, visualization, etc.
- Holistic treatment approaches and herbal remedies such as essential oils, herbal supplements, and teas. Examples of herbal remedies are valerian root, chamomile tea, kava plant, lavender, and lemon balm.
- Always consult with your child's doctor before using any herbal remedies. Doctor can help you understand possible risks and benefits if you choose to try a herbal supplement.



Coping with Anxiety

- The goal is not to eliminate anxiety, but to help a child manage it.
- Do not avoid things just because they make a child anxious.
- Set positive and realistic expectations.
- Respect child's feelings, but do not empower them.
- Do not ask leading questions.
- Break the cycle and practice reframing with your child.
- Help your child build a coping skill set.
- Do not reinforce child's fears.
- Talk to your child and help them understand anxiety.
- Empathize daily.



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Questions