

## Anxiety in Children and Teens:

### General Facts:

- Worries and fears are natural. A clinical anxiety disorder is when they become persistent and excessive and cause significant distress or impairment in daily activities
- Anxiety disorders are the most common childhood onset psychiatric disorders
- Anxiety is associated with educational underachievement, co-occurring psychiatric problems and functional impairment that can persist into adulthood
- Between 10-30% of children and teens have an anxiety disorder
- Anxiety disorders can co-occur with: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Language Disorders, Learning Disabilities and Depression

### What Causes Anxiety:

It is not fully known what causes anxiety disorders. It is a complex interaction between the following factors:

- Biological
- Psychological
- Social and environmental

### Clinical Manifestations:

- Avoidance:
  - Academic - not wanting to go to school
  - Social - avoiding parties, Sleep overs, not wanting to talk to safe strangers
- Physical symptoms:
  - Headaches
  - Abdominal pain
  - Over exaggeration of pain
- Sleep problems:
  - Falling asleep
  - Waking at night
- Excessive need for reassurance prompted by:
  - Bedtime
  - Thunderstorms
  - School time
  - General fears of bad things happening

- Poor school performance:
  - Poor attention
  - Difficulty completing test in the allotted time
- Explosive and oppositional behavior
  - Triggered by things that cause anxiety
  - Anxious children and teens can be irritable
  - Anxious children and teens can have suicidal thoughts or behaviors

If you are concerned that your child or teen may have an anxiety disorder, please let us know. For mild anxiety, parents may be able to use resources such as websites, apps and books to help their children (please see our handout: Resources for Anxiety in Children and Teens). For moderate to severe anxiety, seeing a therapist and medication may be needed.