NAMI

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Anxiety Disorders in Children and Adolescents
What are anxiety disorders

- Anxiety disorders cause people to feel excessively frightened, distressed, and uneasy during situations in which most others would not experience these symptoms. Left untreated, these disorders can dramatically reduce productivity and significantly diminish an individual’s quality of life. Anxiety disorders in children can lead to poor school attendance, low self-esteem, deficient interpersonal skills, alcohol abuse, and adjustment difficulty.
What are anxiety disorders

- Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illnesses in America; they affect as many as one in 10 young people. Unfortunately, these disorders are often difficult to recognize, and many who suffer from them are either too ashamed to seek help or they fail to realize that these disorders can be treated effectively.
The most common anxiety disorders

- Panic Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Phobias
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
The most common anxiety disorders

- **Panic Disorder** -- Characterized by panic attacks, panic disorder results in sudden feelings of terror that strike repeatedly and without warning. Physical symptoms include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, abdominal discomfort, feelings of unreality, and fear of dying.

- Children and adolescents with this disorder may experience unrealistic worry, self-consciousness, and tension.
The most common anxiety disorders

- **Obsessive-compulsive Disorder (OCD)** -- characterized by repeated, intrusive, and unwanted thoughts (obsessions強迫意念) and/or rituals that seem impossible to control (compulsions強迫行為). Adolescents may be aware that their symptoms don’t make sense and are excessive, but younger children may be distressed only when they are prevented from carrying out their compulsive habits. Compulsive behaviors often include counting, arranging and rearranging objects, and excessive hand washing.
The most common anxiety disorders

- **Post-traumatic Stress Disorder** --
  Persistent symptoms of this disorder occur after experiencing a trauma such as abuse, natural disasters, or extreme violence. Symptoms include nightmares; flashbacks; the numbing of emotions; depression; feeling angry, irritable, and distracted; and being easily startled.
The most common anxiety disorders

- **Phobias** -- a disabling and irrational fear of something that really poses little or no actual danger. The fear leads to avoidance of objects or situations and can cause extreme feelings of terror, dread, and panic, which can substantially restrict one's life.

- "Specific" phobias center around particular objects (e.g., certain animals) or situations (e.g., heights or enclosed spaces). Common symptoms for children and adolescents with "social" phobia are hypersensitivity to criticism, difficulty being assertive, and low self-esteem.
The most common anxiety disorders

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder** -- Chronic, exaggerated worry about everyday, routine life events and activities that lasts at least 6 months is indicative of generalized anxiety disorder.

- Children and adolescents with this disorder usually anticipate the worst and often complain of fatigue, tension, headaches, and nausea.
Other recognized anxiety disorders

- include: agoraphobia (懼曠症), acute stress disorder, anxiety disorder due to medical conditions (such as thyroid abnormalities), and substance-induced anxiety disorder (such as from too much caffeine)
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Any known causes of anxiety disorders

Although studies suggest that children and adolescents are more likely to have an anxiety disorder if their caregivers have anxiety disorders, it has not been shown whether biology or environment plays the greater role in the development of these disorders. High levels of anxiety or excessive shyness in children aged 6 to 8 may be indicators of a developing anxiety disorder.
Any known causes of anxiety disorders

- Scientists at the NIMH and elsewhere have recently found that some cases of OCD occur following infection or exposure to streptococcus (链锁状球菌) bacteria. More research is being done to pinpoint who is at greatest risk, but this is another reason to treat strep (链锁状球菌) throats seriously and promptly.
Treatments available for anxiety disorders

Effective treatments for anxiety disorders include medication, specific forms of psychotherapy (known as behavioral therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy), family therapy, or a combination of these. Cognitive-behavioral treatment involves the young person’s learning to deal with his or her fears by modifying the way he or she thinks and behaves by practicing new behaviors.
Treatments available for anxiety disorders

- Ultimately, parents and caregivers should learn to be understanding and patient when dealing with children with anxiety disorders. Specific plans of care can often be developed, and the child or adolescent should be involved in the decision-making process whenever possible.