

## **Anxiety in Victorian children: What do parents know?**

Stakeholder toolkit



### **Recognising anxiety in Victorian children**

This month The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) is launching a communications campaign to help Victorian parents and caregivers recognise the signs of anxiety in children. The aim is to help parents and caregivers understand when and where to seek help for children experiencing anxiety.

The campaign can be found at [rch.org.au/anxiety](https://rch.org.au/anxiety)

#### **How can you help?**

Please pass this information on to your community or network. The information is particularly aimed at Victorian parents of primary school aged children, however it is useful for all parents and caregivers, educators, health professionals and those working in the mental health and wellbeing sector.

### **Key information for parents and caregivers**

- Common signs of anxiety in children include: avoiding everyday situations; tantrums or meltdowns; difficulty sleeping; frequent headaches or tummy aches; seeking reassurance, changes in appetite; being preoccupied; overplanning.
- It can be challenging for parents to recognise when anxiety has become a problem, and know when to seek support for children.
- It's time to seek help if your child has excessive, frequent and ongoing fears and worries that cause them to struggle with, or avoid taking part in typical everyday activities, such as going to school, eating, sleeping or socialising.
- If your child needs help with anxiety, you can explore ways to support them at home, try an online program or speak to your GP, another health professional, or their teacher.

### **Information and resources**

A range of resources have been created to support parents, caregivers, educators and health professionals:

- RCH Kids Health Info fact sheet: [Anxiety - primary school aged children](#) (includes an infographic featuring common signs of anxiety).
- A campaign web page, featuring a [video](#) about recognising anxiety with psychologist Dr Georgina Cox.
- [Personal experiences](#) from parents of children experiencing anxiety.

### Tips for parents to help at home

If your child is showing ongoing signs of anxiety, you can support them at home in the following ways:

- Encourage your child to talk about their feelings and let you know when they get overwhelmed. It might help to explain these feelings are common – we all feel worried or scared sometimes.
- If there is a particular situation your child finds challenging, support them to gradually do the thing that makes them anxious. For example, if going to a crowded shopping centre makes them anxious, start with short trips to the local shops, building up to visiting a shopping centre in a quiet period.
- Make a practical plan together for coping with anxious feelings in the future, such as breathing techniques or reassuring phrases to focus on.
- Take time out to have fun together and take the focus off feelings of anxiety.
- Help your child to have healthy routines that include enough good quality sleep, regular outdoor exercise, eating well and avoiding excessive screen time.
- Prioritise your child attending school. Attending and participating in school will help your child develop important skills and knowledge to help them learn, as well as building their social and emotional skills.

If you are a parent or carer with anxiety, it is important to also care for your own mental health and seek help when you need it.

### Useful resources to help manage anxiety

There are many other organisations with excellent resources to help support children experiencing anxiety, including:

- [The Brave Program](#): An interactive online program aimed at 8–12 year olds to help them overcome worries and learn coping strategies.
- [Fear-Less Triple P Online Course](#): A toolkit to help your child manage anxiety and become more emotionally resilient.
- [Cool Kids Program](#): An interactive online program aimed at 7–12 year olds to help them overcome anxiety and build confidence.
- [The Beyond Blue Child Mental Health Checklist](#): A general tool to check your child's symptoms and whether to get professional help.
- [Kids Help Line](#): A free, confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people.
- [Smiling Mind Kids Care Packages](#): A series of calming activities and audio recordings for children based on mindfulness meditation.
- [Mental health and wellbeing toolkit](#): Advice to support student mental health and wellbeing, aimed at students, parents and caregivers, and schools.
- [Parentline](#): A free phone counselling service where you can discuss parenting challenges and get support.

## Sample material to share

### Sample newsletter or email copy

Anxiety in children is more common than you might think. New research from the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) has found parents report 50% of children are experiencing problems with anxiety. Parents also report finding it hard to recognise the signs of mental health problems in their children, and difficult to know when to seek professional help.

Can you recognise the signs of anxiety in children? Learn the signs and ways to help support your child at [rch.org.au/anxiety](http://rch.org.au/anxiety)

### Sample social media posts

- Anxiety in children is more common than you might think. Learn to recognise anxiety in children at [rch.org.au/anxiety](http://rch.org.au/anxiety)
- New research from the RCH has found parents report 50% of children are experiencing problems with anxiety. Learn to recognise anxiety in children at [rch.org.au/anxiety](http://rch.org.au/anxiety)

## What is the RCH National Child Health Poll?

The RCH National Child Health Poll is a biannual national survey of Australian parents that sheds new light on the big issues in contemporary child and adolescent health.

To learn more about the poll, visit [rchpoll.org.au](http://rchpoll.org.au)