

feelings can be very frightening. Sometimes anxiety can interfere with things you need to do, like learning and sleeping.

For some kids, feelings of anxiety or worry can happen anytime. For others, they might occur only at certain times, like when they are leaving their home or family to go somewhere. In some people, this feeling of anxiety occurs almost all the time and gets in the way of doing what they want to do.

Some kids may have a **phobia** (say: **foe**-bee-uh), which is an intense fear of something specific, such as being up high, getting dirty, the number 13, or spiders.

### **Why Do People Have Anxiety?**

Anxiety can run in families. Or a person might develop anxiety after something terrible happens, like a car crash. Sometimes certain medical illnesses can cause feelings of anxiety. So can abusing alcohol or other drugs, like cocaine.

Another part of the explanation has to do with the different chemicals in the brain. How the chemicals in our brain's nerve cells are balanced can affect how a person feels and acts. One of these chemicals is **serotonin** (say: sir-uh-**toe**-nun). Serotonin is one of the brain chemicals that helps send information from one brain nerve cell to another. But for some people with anxiety, this brain chemical system doesn't always seem to work the way it should.

Also, some scientists think that a special area in the brain controls the fight or flight response. With anxiety, it's like having the fight or flight response stuck in the ON position - even when there is no real danger. That makes it hard to focus on everyday things.

### **Dealing With Anxiety**

Anxiety can be treated successfully. Tell your mom or dad if your anxiety becomes strong and is getting in the way of what you want or need to do. Your parents can take you to a doctor, who can help find out if a medical problem is making you feel anxious. A therapist can help find a way to lessen the anxiety through talking, activities, relaxation exercises, or medication (or a combination of these things).

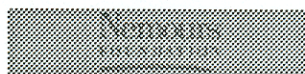
Of course, if you do come face to face with a hungry saber-toothed tiger, there's just one thing you should do . . . RUN!

Reviewed by: David V. Sheslow, PhD

Date reviewed: August 2004

---

[About Us](#) / [Contact Us](#) / [Partners](#) / [Editorial Policy](#) / [Privacy Policy & Terms of Use](#)



Note: All information on KidsHealth is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

©1995-2005 The Nemours Foundation. All rights reserved.