



How to talk about mental health with your child and pediatrician

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Discussing mental health concerns with your child can be uncomfortable, but your pediatrician can be a source of support in navigating difficult topics.

Parents who feel uneasy discussing such topics with their child can start the conversation with their child's pediatrician. The doctor can sort out whether talking with a mental health professional may be necessary.

Doctors may ask your child to fill out a questionnaire that asks how they're doing. Older children are encouraged to talk privately with their pediatricians about mental health.

Children normally experience difficult thoughts, feelings and emotions. If these issues occur more than usual or get in the way of day-to-day functioning, it could be a sign of something more serious.

Signs that a child could need more support include:

- feeling "on edge" or "wound up" most of the time;
- worrying about things for no reason or having negative thoughts that are hard to control;
- feeling panicky or having physical symptoms like headaches, stomach pains, rapid breathing, fast heartbeat or diarrhea;
- avoiding activities because of fear or anxiety;
- changes in sleep or eating habits;
- struggling with schoolwork;
- spending more time alone; or
- talking about death or suicide.

Some people believe we shouldn't talk about mental health. But parents can let their child know they are loved and supported, no matter how they are feeling.

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3F1wLo5> or <https://MentalHealth.gov>.

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