

Adjustment Disorder in Children: Care Instructions



Overview

Adjustment disorder is a mental health condition that results from stress and can cause your child to have severe emotional and behavioral responses. But the response to the stress is far more severe than expected. It's severe enough to affect your child's school, work, or social life. And it may lead to depression and physical pains. Events that may cause this response can include the parents' divorce, awareness of family money problems, or starting school or a new job. It might be anything that causes some stress.

This disorder is most often a short-term condition. It happens within 3 months of the stressful event or change. If the response lasts longer than 6 months after the event ends, your child may have a different mental health condition.

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

How can you care for your child at home?

- Have your child go to all counseling sessions. Do not skip any because you think your child is feeling better.
- If your doctor prescribed medicines, have your child take them exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think your child is having a problem with the medicine. You will get more details on the specific medicines your doctor prescribes.
- Encourage your child to discuss the causes of the stress with a good friend or family member. You and your child also can join a support group for people with similar problems. Talking to others sometimes relieves stress.
- Encourage your child to be active for at least 1 hour every day. Walking is a good choice. Your child also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.

Relaxation techniques

Have your child do relaxation exercises 10 to 20 minutes a day. Your child can play soothing, relaxing music at this time.

Tell others in your house that your child is going to do relaxation exercises. Ask them not to disturb your child. Help your child find a comfortable, quiet place.

Have your child:

- Lie down on their back, or sit with their back straight.
- Focus on breathing. Make it slow and steady.
- Breathe in through the nose, and breathe out through either the nose or mouth.
- Breathe deeply, filling up the area between the navel and the rib cage. Have your child breathe so that their belly goes up and down.
- Have your child breathe like this for 5 to 10 minutes.

As your child continues to breathe slowly and deeply, help your child relax by having them do these next steps for another 5 to 10 minutes:

- Tighten and relax each muscle group. Your child can start at the toes and work up to the head.
- Imagine the muscle groups relaxing and getting heavy.
- Do not think about anything. Empty the mind of all thoughts.
- Relax more and more deeply.
- Be aware of the surrounding calmness.

When the relaxation time is over, have your child come back to alertness by moving their fingers, toes, hands, and feet. Then your child can stretch and move their entire body. Sometimes people fall asleep during relaxation. But they most often wake up soon.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think your child may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You feel your child cannot stop from hurting themselves or someone else.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If your child talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your child has new anxiety, or your child's anxiety gets worse.
- Your child has been feeling sad, depressed, or hopeless or has lost interest in things that they usually enjoy.

- Your child does not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **D771** in the search box to learn more about "**Adjustment Disorder in Children: Care Instructions**".

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Overview

Adjustment disorder is a mental health condition that results from stress and can cause severe emotional and behavioral responses. But your response to the stress is far more severe than expected. It is severe enough to affect your work or social life and may lead to depression and physical pains and problems. Events that may cause this response can include a divorce, money problems, or starting school or a new job. It might be anything that causes some stress.

This disorder is most often a short-term condition. It happens within 3 months of the stressful event or change. If the response lasts longer than 6 months after the event ends, you may have a different mental health condition.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Go to all counseling sessions. Do not skip any because you are feeling better.
- If your doctor prescribed medicines, take them exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. You will get more details on the specific medicines your doctor prescribes.
- Discuss the causes of your stress with a good friend or family member. Or you can join a support group for people with similar problems. Talking to others sometimes relieves stress.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.

Relaxation techniques

Do relaxation exercises 10 to 20 minutes a day. You can play soothing, relaxing music while you do them, if you wish.

- Tell others in your house that you are going to do your relaxation exercises. Ask them not to disturb you.
- Find a comfortable, quiet place.
- Lie down on your back, or sit with your back straight.
- Focus on your breathing. Make it slow and steady.
- Breathe in through your nose. Breathe out through either your nose or mouth.
- Breathe deeply, filling up the area between your navel and your rib cage. Breathe so that your belly goes up and down.
- Do not hold your breath.
- Breathe like this for 5 to 10 minutes. Notice the feeling of calmness throughout your whole body.

As you continue to breathe slowly and deeply, relax by doing these next steps for another 5 to 10 minutes:

- Tighten and relax each muscle group in your body. Start at your toes, and work your way up to your head.
- Imagine your muscle groups relaxing and getting heavy.
- Empty your mind of all thoughts.
- Let yourself relax more and more deeply.
- Be aware of the state of calmness that surrounds you.
- When your relaxation time is over, you can bring yourself back to alertness by moving your fingers and toes. Then move your hands and feet. And then move your entire body. Sometimes people fall asleep during relaxation. But they most often wake up soon.
- Always give yourself time to return to full alertness before you drive a car. Wait to do anything that might cause an accident if you are not fully alert. Never play a relaxation tape while you drive a car.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You feel you cannot stop from hurting yourself or someone else.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

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