

Aussie kids seeking help with ADHD, anxiety disorders

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Almost one in seven Australian children suffers from a mental health disorder over the course of a year, according to a Telethon Kids Institute (TKI) study.

They found attention-deficit or hyperactivity disorders was the most common type of mental health concern in children and teenagers.

They determined 7.4 per cent of children had ADHD in the 12 months leading up to the survey.

Anxiety disorders came a close second, with 6.9 per cent of [kids](#) suffering from anxiety over the 12 months.

The findings are from the latest [Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing](#) which surveyed more than 6000 kids aged between four and 17.

The survey found mental health concerns are associated with children having a significant amount of time away from school.

With kids who suffer from anxiety missing 12 days of school a year on average because of their symptoms.

Children with a [major depressive disorder](#) missed 20 days of school a year on average.

"We know from other research we've done that that level of absence from school is enough to have a significant impact on kids' educational attainment," lead author and Telethon Kids Institute researcher David Lawrence says.

"It's not just kids internalising these problems. If not treated, obviously there's the potential for that to impact on a young person's entire life trajectory."

Self-harm widespread among teenage girls

It was also concerning to see high rates of depression, self-harm and [suicidal behaviour](#) in adolescents, Prof Lawrence says.

Suicidal behaviour was particularly prevalent among 16 and 17-year-old girls who participated in the study.

He says just over half of children with a disorder that warranted [mental health services](#) were accessing help.

This is a significant improvement since the Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing was last conducted in 1998, he says.

At that time only one in four children with a mental disorder were accessing [mental health](#) services.

"In our survey we found overall 56 per cent of [children](#) and adolescents with a mental disorder, in the 12 months prior to the survey, had some contact with services," Professor Lawrence says.

"The majority of those with a severe mental disorder—almost 90 per cent—were receiving some sort of service contact.

Prof Lawrence suggests parents who are concerned about their child or teenager see a GP as their first point of call.

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