

Severe anxiety best treated with drugs and therapy

October 3 2017, by Bill Hathaway



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Children and teens with severe anxiety need both behavioral therapy and medication for the best chance of improvement, a new Yale-led analysis has found.

A prior landmark study of 488 youths between the ages of seven and 17

had shown that [cognitive behavioral therapy](#), the antidepressant sertraline, or a combination of drugs and therapy all improved outcomes.

As a result, many doctors and parents opted to see if behavioral therapy worked before starting medication. However, a closer look at the data showed that only the combination of drugs and therapy worked on those who had more severe cases of generalized, social and [separation anxiety](#), according to results published Oct. 2 in the *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*.

"In cases of [severe anxiety](#) the most sensible thing may often be to start combined treatment right away," said co-author, Eli Lebowitz, assistant professor of psychology and psychiatry, and associate director of the Anxiety and Mood Disorders Program at the Yale Child Study Center.

The study also found that some subgroups, such as youths from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those also diagnosed with [obsessive-compulsive disorder](#), were more resistant to any treatment or combination of therapies.

More information: Jerome H. Taylor et al. Monotherapy Insufficient in Severe Anxiety? Predictors and Moderators in the Child/Adolescent Anxiety Multimodal Study, *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/15374416.2017.1371028](https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2017.1371028)

Provided by Yale University

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