

## Specific Phobia

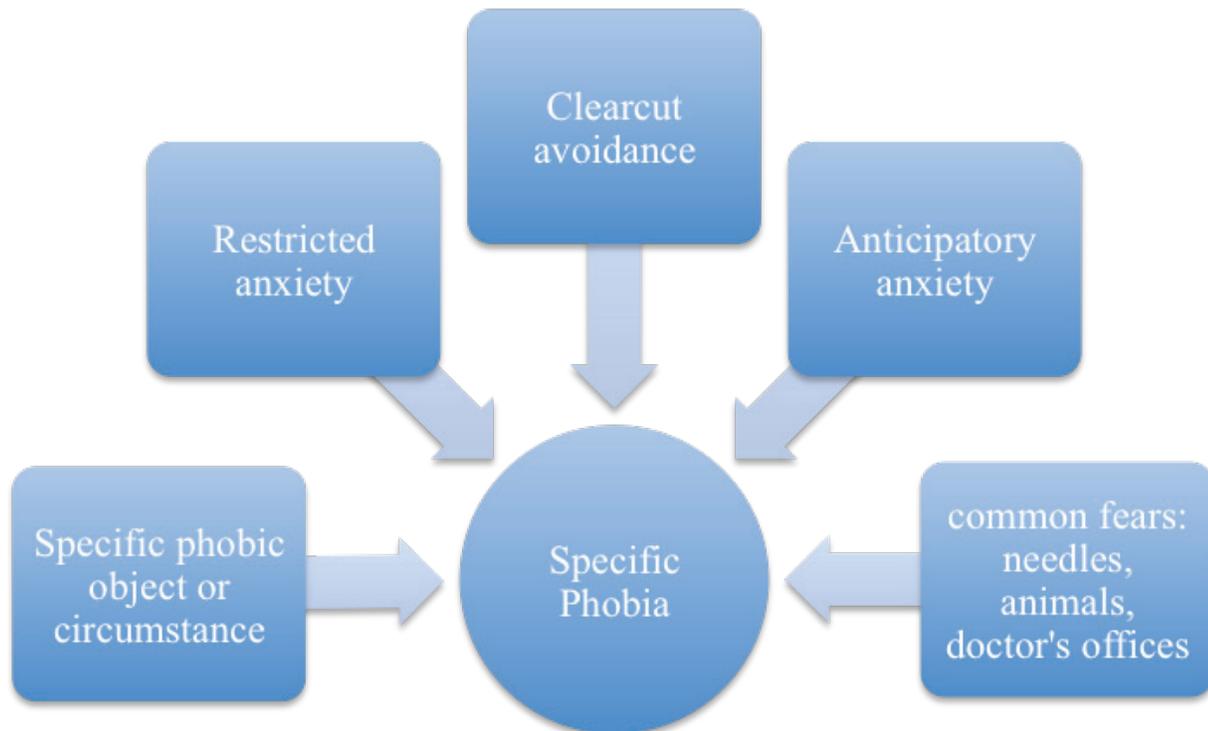
### Diagnosis

Children usually present with excessive fear related to some well-circumscribed situation or object. Often parents will complain that the child is preoccupied with the object, causing the fear or the attempts to avoid it to interfere with family life. The child's play, relationship with peers and family members as well as school performance can be negatively influenced by avoidance of a feared situation or even by incapacitating anticipatory anxiety.

### Differential Diagnosis

The initial task is to differentiate developmentally appropriate fears from a specific phobia. Specific phobia is not diagnosed if the child's anxiety is better accounted for by another disorder. See the table below for differentiating features.

GAD	Fears and worries tend not to be confined to a specific object or situation
Panic Disorder	Fears in panic disorder are related to anticipation of re-experience of an attack
Social Phobia	Fears are confined to social situations, especially if one's performance is subject to scrutiny
OCD	Fear of contamination, asymmetry, or unfinished action (Checking)
Separation anxiety disorder	Fear of separation from loved ones in



## Social Phobia (Social Anxiety Disorder)

### Diagnosis

Children with Social Phobia typically do not spontaneously report nor seek treatment for their disorder. The following symptoms should alert the clinician to Social Phobia:

- school refusal
- test anxiety
- shyness
- poor peer relationships
- problems in social situations
- difficulty using public restrooms
- trouble eating in front of other people

To date, there are no laboratory tests or physiological probes that have been demonstrated to be pathognomonic for SP. The Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory for Children (SPAI-C) and the Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory (SPAI) are empirically derived inventories meant to be used with children ages 8-14 years of age and over 14 years of age, respectively for diagnostic assessment and clinical monitoring of treatment.

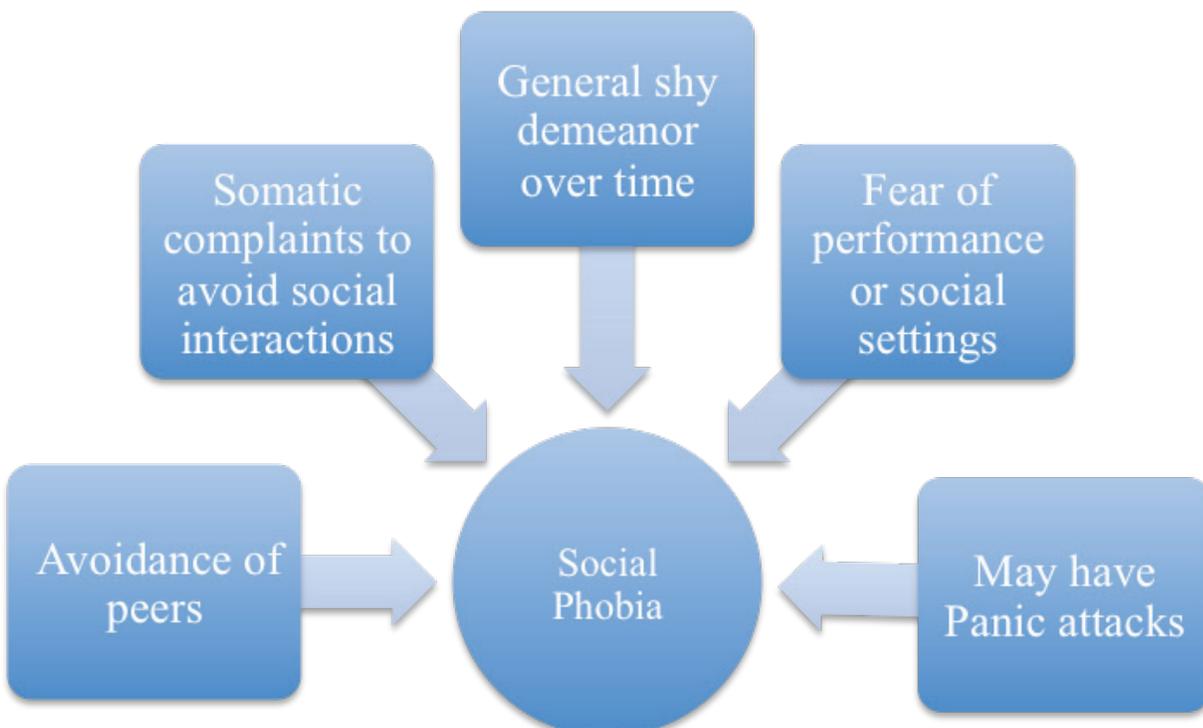
### Differential Diagnosis

The following should be considered in the differential diagnosis:

- panic disorder with agoraphobia
- separation anxiety disorder
- generalized anxiety disorder
- specific phobia

Classically, SP is characterized by the avoidance of social situations in the absence of panic attacks. Although social avoidance may occur in panic disorder with agoraphobia, it is the specific fear of having a panic attack or being seen while having a panic attack that discriminates the two disorders. Fears in individuals with agoraphobia may or may not include the fear of scrutiny by others. Also, unlike SP, agoraphobic individuals may be reassured in social situations by the presence of a companion.

In separation anxiety disorder, the primary fear is one of separation from the primary caretaker. These individuals are usually comfortable in social settings in the home, whereas socially phobic individuals are distressed in social situations, even in the home.



## Panic Disorder

### Diagnosis

A somewhat intricate relationship between PD, other anxiety disorders and depression calls for a thorough clinical assessment. A detailed history should be obtained from the patient, family members, teachers and other professionals acquainted with the child, as with the child. Discerning whether the child can predict the onset of the attack is important for differential diagnosis. Pediatric and neurological exams can be helpful in some instances to elucidate the origin of somatic complaints or unusual sensations. Anxiety symptom scales may provide useful diagnostic information and later assist in evaluating treatment progress.

### Differential Diagnosis

It is essential to differentiate PD from medical conditions such as hyperthyroidism, hyperparathyroidism, pheochromocytoma, diabetes, asthma, seizures, vestibular dysfunction or cardiac problems. Intoxication with stimulants or withdrawal from sedatives can produce symptoms that mimic panic attacks.

The following table helps to differentiate Panic Disorder from other anxiety disorders.

Separation Anxiety Disorder	Fear and panic occurring only when a child is separated from an attachment figure.
Social Phobia	Discomfort is experienced only in situations when one is subjected to scrutiny.
Specific Phobia	Fear and anxiety are an expected response to confrontation of the phobic object.
OCD	Obsessions and compulsive rituals are present.
PTSD	Recollection of past trauma usually precedes emotional and autonomic distress.

