

Definition: Refusal to attend school, distress with being at school. Often willing to do schoolwork at home.

Different from Truancy: Unexcused absences, dishonesty, lack of anxiety about absences, apathetic about meeting academic expectations

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES

- Underachievement
- Peer rejection
- Family tension
- Unemployment
- Unmanaged mental illness



Prognosis worsens with time if unmanaged

PRESENTATION

- Absenteeism, lateness, avoiding classroom
- Leaving school early to return home
- Emotional distress, behavioral outbursts, clinging
- Somatic symptoms (GI, autonomic, pain) **often resolve if the child is allowed to remain home**
- Common in early grades, after transition periods (new school, after school break, after illness)

CAUSAL FACTORS

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Learning disorders, ADHD, language disorders
- Avoiding social or academic stressors (e.g. bullying)
- Chronic illness
- Poor sleep





FAMILY FACTORS

- Disruption, death, divorce, trauma, parent illness, child/sibling removal from home
- Parent: mental health, mistrust of school system, own negative school experience, devaluing education

MANAGEMENT

Must be a collaborative multidisciplinary effort with the goal of having the child return to school and activities as soon as possible

PHYSICIANS	CAREGIVERS	EDUCATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Address contributing factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Medical conditions ● Psychoeducational assessment ● Sleep ● Mental Health ❑ Psychoeducational support for parents and teachers ❑ If anxiety or depression, consider CBT or SSRIs ❑ If ADHD, consider stimulants ❑ Inpatient admission for intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Be empathetic but firm about return to school ❑ Track attendance goals ❑ Family therapy ❑ SPACE (Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions) ❑ Shift focus from child's distress to their efforts to attend school ❑ Address own anxiety ❑ Make staying home unrewarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Supportive classroom ❑ Address bullying ❑ Educational interventions and accommodations ❑ Identify adult and peer support figures ❑ Consistency with management plan developed with family and health care team 