

Fact Sheet

ANXIETY

What is Anxiety?



Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure. Anxiety is different from fear, but they are often used interchangeably.

Anxiety is considered a future-oriented, long-acting response broadly focused on a diffuse threat, while fear is an appropriate, present-oriented, and short-lived response to a clearly identifiable and specific threat.

What are Anxiety Disorders?

- While experiencing occasional anxiety is a reasonable part of life, anxiety disorders cause people to experience frequent intense, excessive, and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations.
- Typically, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of extreme anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks).
- These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are disproportionate to the actual danger, and can last a long time.
- You may avoid places or situations to prevent these feelings. Symptoms may start during childhood or the teen and continue into adulthood.

Symptoms of Disorders

Symptoms of depression can present as physical, mental, and/or behavioral and they include:

Physical Symptoms

- Cold or sweaty hands
- Nausea
- Heart Palpitations

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Symptoms of Disorders (continued)

- Numbness or tingling in hands or feet
- Muscle tension
- Shortness of breath

Mental Symptoms

- Feeling panic, fear, and uneasiness
- Nightmares
- Repeated thoughts or flashbacks of traumatic experiences
- Uncontrollable, obsessive thoughts

Behavioral Symptoms

- Inability to be still and calm
- Ritualistic behaviors, such as washing hands repeatedly
- Trouble sleeping

Treatment for Anxiety Disorders

The two main treatment options for anxiety disorders are psychotherapy and medications. Some people benefit more from a combination of the two and it may take trial and error to determine which treatment works best for each individual.

Lifestyle and Home Remedies

While most people with anxiety disorders need psychotherapy and/or medications, the following lifestyle changes can also make a difference:

- Keep physically active and eat healthy
- Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs
- Quit smoking
- Use stress management and relaxation techniques
- Make sleep a priority
- Cut back or quit drinking caffeinated beverages

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Toolkit

<https://mcpres.mayoclinic.org/emotional-health/9-tips-for-coping-with-an-anxiety-disorder/>

<https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/features/coping-with-anxiety>

SAMHSA's National Helpline - 1-800-662-HELP (4357) free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

Research & Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20350967>

https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders#part_2235

<https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/guide/anxiety-disorders>

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