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## ANXIETY ILLNESSES

<https://www.crisisnetwork.org/find-help/behavioral-health-conditions/anxiety-disorders/>

Anxiety can be a good thing in a certain situation. It can motivate you, make you more creative and can help you turn a paper, painting or important work piece from good to excellent. But when you have an **anxiety illness**, you are worried all the time. This can change a person's everyday life. There are many reasons why a person can have an anxiety illness. Many times, it runs in families. This illness can be treated in several ways. This kind of illness can make your feelings range from uneasy to being so scared that you can't do anything. There are many types of anxiety illnesses. This illness includes common anxiety or a fear of an object or situation. Stress after a terrible experience can also bring on an anxiety illness. The information below will help you begin to learn about anxiety illnesses, but it doesn't include all the signs and ways to help. Keep in mind that new studies can give us new answers and change the way we treat these types of illnesses.

### COMMON ANXIETY ILLNESS

When a person has anxiety, they can have a sick feeling in their stomach. This can happen when they have a lot of bills to pay or just before a job interview. Or it can happen at some other point in their lives when they feel uncomfortable. This uneasy feeling is common and everyone has it at some point. A person is likely to have an anxiety illness when they cannot get over these worries, and they are so upset that it affects their everyday life.

#### SYMPTOMS:

- Increased worry
- High stress levels
- Increased aggravation
- Not being able to sit still
- Trouble falling asleep
- Headaches, shaking, muscle tightness or sweating

*A person with an anxiety illness has these symptoms a lot more than a normal person would in a similar situation.*

**DOCTOR'S FINDINGS:** When a person is experiencing the above symptoms with everyday problems for at least six months, he or she may have an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders can affect their everyday life.

**TREATMENT:** Anxiety is the most common type of mental illness, but it can be helped. A type of help is working with a doctor or professional. They can help a person learn how about his or her illness and ways it can be treated. Medication may also be needed in some cases and can be very helpful. Some common anti-anxiety medications are diazepam, alprazolam, lorazepam and buspirone.

### PANIC DISORDER

People with panic disorder experience fear that makes their heart pound and can take their breath away. This type of attack happens all of a sudden and without warning. Since people don't know when the next time an attack may happen, they worry about it all the time. Most panic attacks last only a few minutes, but they can go on for ten minutes. A few have been known to last for as long as an hour. They can happen at any time, even during sleep. The good news is that the right treatment can help most people with panic disorder within six to eight weeks.

#### SYMPTOMS:

Common physical symptoms include:

- Pounding heart
- Chest pains
- Feeling light in the head or dizzy
- Feeling sick in the stomach
- Having a hard time breathing
- Shaking
- Choking
- Lack of feeling
- Tingling
- Hot flashes
- Chills
- Sweating

People with panic disorder have feelings of extreme fear and dread that strike for no reason. Their heart races. They have rapid breathing, sweating and shakiness. Some go to the hospital because they think they are having a heart attack. Panic attacks can happen in everyday situations. People with this condition often avoid places where they've had a panic attack. They may become housebound.

**DOCTOR'S FINDINGS:** It's common to have four attacks within four weeks or one or more attacks in a month caused by fears of having another attack. A person with panic disorder will have at least four of the above symptoms during at least one of the attacks.

**TREATMENT:** There are many kinds of medications to help a person with panic disorder. Many times getting help from therapy and getting medication is the best way to help people.

### **FEAR OF AN OBJECT OR ACTION**

Many of us stay away from some things like stinging bugs or dangerous situations, but sometimes people are so scared that it makes them unnecessarily stay away from certain things or situations. This can cause a person to feel a lot of anxiety.

#### **SYMPTOMS:**

There are many types of anxiety. One type is a fear of a certain object or situation like:

- Dogs
- Driving on highways
- Flying
- Heights
- Spiders

This type of anxiety can be caused by an infinite number of other objects or situations.

#### **Fear of being anywhere where one of these objects or situations might be.**

The person feels they cannot get away from it. Many people who have this type of anxiety won't leave their house. Others avoid open spaces, standing in line or being in a crowd. Many of the physical symptoms that come with this type of panic attack include but are not limited to:

- Sweating
- Pounding heart
- Shaking

#### **Fear of being embarrassed in front of other people.**

The most common symptom in this type of fear is public speaking.

**DOCTOR'S FINDINGS:** The person is very nervous when he or she is around the object or situation they fear. His or her fear is a lot more than a normal person would have. The fear keeps the person from doing everyday things and causes him or her to stay away from people. It can also affect how the person lives with their family and friendships.

**TREATMENT:** Therapy can help a person deal with the situation or object they fear. It can teach a person to know the signs and how to relax. The person will learn how to work with their thoughts and feelings of anxiety. Medications can also help. Often, both therapy and medication are the best way to help a person.

### **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)**

In the past, PTSD was thought to affect only people who were in a war. Now we know that adults and children alike can get this disorder without having been in a war. PTSD occurs when a person has seen or was part of a situation where he or she felt in danger. This includes but is not limited to rape, kidnapping, natural disasters, war or a bad accident like an airplane crash. PTSD can affect a person so much that it makes it hard for him or her to get a job. PTSD also can affect a person's relationship with his or her family and friends.

#### **SYMPTOMS:**

- Not being able to think or act clearly because a person is always thinking about what happened
- Anxiety
- Jumpiness
- Hard time focusing
- Nightmares
- Not being able to sleep

People stay away from things that remind them of the event. Reminders – even smells and odors - can cause strong feelings of pain or panic attacks. For example, a woman who has been raped might stay away from all men and won't go out alone at night. Many people also get symptoms of depression. Some people may misuse alcohol or drugs to cope with their pain and to forget about the event. PTSD is a reaction to a terrifying event. The event could be something that happened to you. Or something you saw. The event keeps returning in bad memories. PTSD causes intense fear and a feeling of helplessness. People with PTSD can become numb. They may feel guilt for surviving or can have problems sleeping. PTSD is fairly common. At some point, most people have seen a very serious, traumatic event.

**DOCTOR'S FINDINGS:** Fear is expected after going through a terrible event but becomes a disorder when it continues for more than three months.

**TREATMENT:** Therapy can help people get control over their lives. Many who have PTSD need to face what has happened to them. By facing what has happened, they learn to accept that it is a part of their past. They also need help to get over the constant painful behaviors and thoughts and learn how to relax. Support from family and friends can help a person get better more quickly. Medications can help the symptoms of depression and sleep problems. The best treatment for this fear includes both therapy and medication.

### **SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER (SAD)**

SAD is the most common. People with SAD have a fear of social or work situations.

People who have SAD are nervous when out in public. They think people are looking at them, they're not saying the right things, or they don't look right. These people begin to avoid going out. As a result, they don't have as many friends as they could. SAD also affects them at work. Many jobs involve speaking in front of other people. So, SAD can have a very broad effect on your life. This is not shyness. SAD is a disorder.

### **GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)**

These people worry over everyday events and decisions. They feel the world is not safe and that bad things happen to good people. They feel anxious or become restless, tired, irritable, and tense.

### **OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)**

People who suffer from OCD repeat patterns of senseless thoughts and behaviors. It is difficult to stop. If left untreated, OCD can destroy a person's capacity to function at work, school or even at home.

### **WHY ME?**

First, you are not alone. 40 million Americans have an anxiety disorder. Scientists aren't sure why some people get anxiety disorders. Different people in the same situation react in very different ways. These disorders run in families. If a parent has a disorder, chances are that the children may have one. Infants who tend to be shy or timid in social situations have higher rates of anxiety disorders when they get older.

### **GETTING HELP**

*If you think you or someone you are close to has an anxiety illness, get help from a health care provider.*

The teenage years are an important period for finding and treating anxiety disorders. If aggressively treated as adolescents many of these disorders may not become chronic. But help at any age can be effective. If you think you have an anxiety disorder, talk to your health care provider. There are many different types of treatments available.

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#### **To find local help:**

**US Department of Health and Human Services | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:**

- **<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>**

*The Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator is a confidential and anonymous source of information for persons seeking treatment facilities in the United States or U.S. Territories for substance use/addiction and/or mental health problems.*