

Learning About Anxiety Disorders



What are anxiety disorders?

Anxiety disorders are a type of medical problem. They cause severe anxiety. When you feel anxious, you feel that something bad is about to happen. This feeling interferes with your life.

These disorders include:

- **Generalized anxiety disorder.** You feel worried and stressed about many everyday events and activities. This goes on for several months and disrupts your life on most days.
- **Panic disorder.** You have repeated panic attacks. A panic attack is a sudden, intense fear or anxiety. It may make you feel short of breath. Your heart may pound.
- **Social anxiety disorder.** You feel very anxious about what you will say or do in front of people. For example, you may be scared to talk or eat in public. This problem affects your daily life.
- **Phobias.** You are very scared of a specific object, situation, or activity. For example, you may fear spiders, high places, or small spaces.

What are the symptoms?

Generalized anxiety disorder

Symptoms may include:

- Feeling worried and stressed about many things almost every day.
- Feeling tired or irritable. You may have a hard time concentrating.
- Having headaches or muscle aches.
- Having a hard time getting to sleep or staying asleep.

Panic disorder

You may have repeated panic attacks when there is no reason for feeling afraid. You may change your daily activities because you worry that you will have another attack.

Symptoms may include:

- Intense fear, terror, or anxiety.
- Trouble breathing or very fast breathing.
- Chest pain or tightness.
- A heartbeat that races or is not regular.

Social anxiety disorder

Symptoms may include:

- Fear about a social situation, such as eating in front of others or speaking in public. You may worry a lot. Or you may be afraid that something bad will happen.
- Anxiety that can cause you to blush, sweat, and feel shaky.
- A heartbeat that is faster than normal.
- A hard time focusing.

Phobias

Symptoms may include:

- More fear than most people of being around an object, being in a situation, or doing an activity. You might also be stressed about the chance of being around the thing you fear.
- Worry about losing control, panicking, fainting, or having physical symptoms like a faster heartbeat when you are around the situation or object.

How are these disorders treated?

Anxiety disorders can be treated with medicines or counseling. A combination of both may be used.

Medicines may include:

- Antidepressants. These may help your symptoms by keeping chemicals in your brain in balance.
- Benzodiazepines. These may give you short-term relief of your symptoms.

Some people use cognitive-behavioral therapy. A therapist helps you learn to change stressful or bad thoughts into helpful thoughts.

Lead a healthy lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle may help you feel better.

- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice.
- Eat a healthy diet. Include fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains in your diet each day.

- Try to go to bed at the same time every night. Try for 8 hours of sleep a night.
- Find ways to manage stress. Try relaxation exercises.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

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Learning About Generalized Anxiety Disorder



What is generalized anxiety disorder?

We all worry. It's a normal part of life. But when you have generalized anxiety disorder, you worry about lots of things and have a hard time stopping your worry. This worry or anxiety interferes with your relationships, work, and life.

What causes it?

The cause of generalized anxiety disorder is not known. Some studies show that it might be passed down through families. Several things can cause symptoms of anxiety. They include some health problems, some medicines, too much caffeine, and illegal drugs such as cocaine.

What are the symptoms?

Generalized anxiety disorder can make you feel worried and stressed about many things almost every day. You may have a hard time controlling your worry.

Symptoms include:

- Feeling tired or cranky. You may have a hard time concentrating.
- Having headaches or muscle aches.
- Feeling shaky, sweating, or having hot flashes.
- Feeling lightheaded, sick to your stomach, or out of breath.
- Feeling like you can't relax. Or being startled easily.
- Having problems falling or staying asleep.

How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask about your health and how often you worry or feel anxious. People with generalized anxiety disorder have more worry and stress than normal. They feel worried and stressed about many things almost every day. And these feelings have lasted for at least 6 months.

Your doctor also may ask about other symptoms, like whether you:

- Feel restless.
- Feel tired.
- Have a hard time thinking or feel that your mind goes blank.
- Feel cranky.
- Have tense muscles.
- Have sleep problems.

A physical exam and tests can help make sure that your symptoms aren't caused by a different condition, such as a thyroid problem.

How is it treated?

Counseling and medicine can both work to treat anxiety. The two are often used along with lifestyle changes.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of counseling that's used to help treat anxiety. In CBT, you learn how to notice and replace thoughts that make you feel worried. It also can help you learn how to relax when you worry.

Applied relaxation therapy may also be used. Your counselor might ask you to imagine a calming situation. This can help you relax.

Medicines can help. These medicines are often also used for depression. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are often tried first. But there are other medicines that your doctor may use. You may need to try a few medicines to find one that works well.

Many people feel better by getting regular exercise, eating healthy meals, and getting good sleep. Mindfulness—focusing on things in the present moment—also can help reduce your anxiety.

What can you expect when you have it?

Having anxiety can be upsetting. Some people might feel less worried and stressed after a couple of months of treatment. But for other people, it might take longer to feel better.

Reaching out to people for help is important. Try not to isolate yourself. Let your family and friends help you. Find someone you can trust and confide in. Talk to that person.

When you know what anxiety is—and how you can get help for it—you can start to learn new ways of thinking. This can help you cope and work through your anxiety.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

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Generalized Anxiety Disorder: Care Instructions



Overview

We all worry. It's a normal part of life. But when you have generalized anxiety disorder, you worry about lots of things. You have a hard time not worrying. This worry or anxiety interferes with your relationships, work or school, and other areas of your life.

You may worry most days about things like money, health, work, or friends. That may make you feel tired, tense, or cranky. It can make it hard to think. It may get in the way of healthy sleep.

Counseling and medicine can both work to treat anxiety. They are often used together with lifestyle changes, such as getting enough sleep. Treatment can include a type of counseling called cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT. It helps you notice and replace thoughts that make you worry. You also might have counseling along with those closest to you so that they can help.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.
- Learn and do relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing.
- Go to bed at the same time every night. Try for 8 to 10 hours of sleep a night.
- Avoid alcohol, marijuana, and illegal drugs.
- Find a counselor who uses cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).
- Don't isolate yourself. Let those closest to you help you. Find someone you can trust and confide in. Talk to that person.
- Be safe with medicines. Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.

- Practice healthy thinking. How you think can affect how you feel and act. Ask yourself if your thoughts are helpful or unhelpful. If they are unhelpful, you can learn how to change them.
- Recognize and accept your anxiety. When you feel anxious, say to yourself, "This is not an emergency. I feel uncomfortable, but I am not in danger. I can keep going even if I feel anxious."

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You feel you can't stop from hurting yourself or someone else.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

Call your doctor or counselor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new anxiety, or your anxiety gets worse.
- You have been feeling sad, depressed, or hopeless or have lost interest in things that you usually enjoy.
- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

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