

# ANXIETY



Mental Health  
Foundation Australia

## WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is an unpleasant emotion that most people feel when something might be perceived as risky, stressful or frightening. Stress and anxious feelings are a common response to a situation where we feel under pressure, they usually pass once the situation has passed or the 'stressor' is removed.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS



## WHAT ARE ANXIETY DISORDERS?

Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion 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 years and continue into adulthood.

## MAJOR ANXIETY DISORDERS

GENERALIZED ANXIETY  
DISORDER

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE  
DISORDER

SOCIAL ANXIETY  
DISORDER

PANIC  
DISORDER

POST-TRAUMATIC  
STRESS DISORDER

SEPARATION ANXIETY  
DISORDER

AGORAPHOBIA

CLAUSTROPHOBIA

SPECIFIC PHOBIAS

## GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is long-lasting and pervasive anxious arousal with no particular focus. People with this disorder worry over everyday issues and anticipate disaster. The worry is out of proportion to the actual circumstance, is difficult to control and affects how you feel physically. It often occurs along with other anxiety disorders or depression.

## SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

People who suffer from Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) feel anxious when exposed to others' scrutiny. Their fear of public humiliation is intense and affects most of their social interaction. Some of the symptoms include blushing, sweating and difficulty speaking cause distress and can lead to social isolation.

## PANIC DISORDER

Panic Disorder involves recursive episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes. You may have feelings of impending doom, shortness of breath, chest pain, or a rapid, fluttering or pounding heart (heart palpitations). These panic attacks may lead to worrying about them happening again or avoiding situations in which they've occurred.

## AGORAPHOBIA AND CLAUSTROPHOBIA

Other common phobias are fear of open, unprotected spaces (Agoraphobia).

## CLAUSTROPHOBIA

A fear of being closeted in a small space without being able to escape or get if needed (Claustrophobia) and fear of particular species such as dog, birds, snakes and spiders.

## SEPARATION ANXIETY DISORDER

Separation anxiety disorder is a childhood disorder characterized by anxiety that's excessive for the child's developmental level and related to separation from parents or others who have parental roles.

## SPECIFIC PHOBIAS

Specific phobias are characterized by major anxiety when you're exposed to a specific object or situation and a desire to avoid it.

## SUBSTANCE / MEDICATION INDUCED ANXIETY DISORDER

Substance-induced anxiety disorder is nervousness, restlessness, or panic caused by taking a drug or stopping a drug.

## WHAT CAUSES ANXIETY?

There are numerous factors that contribute to the anxiety disorder. A genetic predisposition and having a sensitive, reactive makeup may play a part. Untreated childhood fears and a belief system that emphasises vulnerability and the need for perfection and approval may be other factors. Certain medical conditions like palpitations or low blood sugar are recognised as signs of panic attacks. Moreover, alcohol and drugs are one of the reasons to increase anxiety in predisposed individuals.

## GETTING HELP

### ANXIETY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



Slow breathing and progressive muscle relaxation



Keeping active, eating well and spending time with family and friends



The Foundation offers support group for people suffering from anxiety, more information available on website



Learn more about anxiety and its causes



### SEE A DOCTOR IF IT KEEPS CONTINUING AND IF:

- You feel like you're worrying too much, and it is causing a disruption with your work, studies and relationships.
- You feel depressed or have any other mental health concerns with anxiety.
- You have suicidal thoughts or behaviours - if this is the case, seek emergency treatment immediately.

## OTHER TREATMENTS

### Psychotherapy

There are several types of effective psychological treatments for anxiety, as well as different delivery options. Some people prefer to work one on one with a professional, while others get more out of a group environment. A growing number of online programs, or e-therapies, are also available.

### Medication

Medication is useful in controlling symptoms, so that a person can effectively apply what they learn from psychological support and psychotherapy.

### Counselling

Supportive counselling can also reduce stress, change negative self-perceptions, develop better coping skills and provide practical advice on reducing drug and alcohol use.

For more information on anxiety disorders, contact:  
Mental Health Foundation Australia  
[www.mhfa.org.au](http://www.mhfa.org.au)

 1300 643 287

 [supportgroup@mhfa.org.au](mailto:supportgroup@mhfa.org.au)