

Anxiety Disorders: *get the facts*

WHAT ARE ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety disorders range from feelings of uneasiness to immobilizing bouts of terror. This fact sheet briefly describes the different types of anxiety disorders.

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is characterized by 6 months or more of chronic, exaggerated worry and tension that is unfounded or much more severe than the normal anxiety most people experience. People with this disorder usually expect the worst; they worry excessively about money, health, family, or work, even when there are no signs of trouble. They are unable to relax and often suffer from insomnia. Many people with GAD also have physical symptoms, such as fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headaches, irritability or hot flashes.

Panic Disorder: People with panic disorder experience white-knuckled, heart-pounding terror that strikes suddenly and without warning. Since they cannot predict when a panic attack will seize them, many people live in persistent worry that another one could overcome them at any moment.

Phobias: Most of us steer clear of certain, hazardous things. Phobias however, are irrational fears that lead people to altogether avoid specific things or situations that trigger intense anxiety. Phobias occur in several forms, for example, agoraphobia is the fear of being in any situation that might trigger a panic attack and from which escape might be difficult. Social phobia is a fear of being extremely embarrassed in front of other people. The most common social phobia is fear of public speaking.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: Researchers now know that anyone, even children, can develop PTSD if they have experienced, witnessed, or participated in a traumatic occurrence-especially if the event was life threatening. PTSD can result from terrifying experiences such as rape, kidnapping, natural disasters, or war or serious accidents such as airplane crashes. The psychological damage such incidents cause can interfere with a person's ability to hold a job or to develop intimate relationships with others.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

Symptoms of anxiety disorders can include:

- Chronic or exaggerated worry
- Pounding heart
- Chest pains
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Shaking or trembling
- Choking
- Fear of dying
- Sweating
- Feelings of unreality
- Numbness or tingling
- Hot flashes, sweating or chills
- A feeling of going out of control or going crazy

Research shows that generalized anxiety often coexists with depression, substance abuse, or other anxiety disorders. Other conditions associated with stress, such as irritable bowel syndrome, often accompany GAD. Patients with physical symptoms such as insomnia or headaches should also tell their doctors about their feelings of worry and tension. This will help the patient's health care provider recognize that the person is suffering from anxiety.

TREATMENTS

Anxiety is among the most common, most treatable mental disorders. Effective treatments depends on the specific type of anxiety disorder but commonly include cognitive behavioral therapy, psychotherapy relaxation techniques, biofeedback to control muscle tension and medication. Medications, such anti-anxiety agents and antidepressants are used to reduce anxiety and can ease the symptoms of depression and sleep problems.

**To Get Help for Anxiety Contact
Your Community Mental Health Center:**

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6075 Golden Gate Parkway
Naples, FL 34116
239-455-8500
davidlawrencecenter.org**