

What are anxiety disorders?

What are the signs of anxiety disorders?

What are the treatments for anxiety disorders?

What can I do if I think I have an anxiety disorder?

Take the next step – Make the connection.

Explore these resources for more information about anxiety disorders.

Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. Sometimes it can be positive, for example, if it helps you deal with a tense situation in the office, study harder for an exam, handle a new situation, or stay focused on an important task. In general, it helps people cope. But when anxiety becomes excessive, doesn't fit the situation, or lasts a long time, it can get in the way of your everyday activities and may interfere with how you get along with others.

There are several types of anxiety disorders with a variety of symptoms. Some people have repeated short-term episodes of intense fear, while others have exaggerated worry and tension most of the time or in everyday social situations. Sometimes, the anxiety comes with physical symptoms like heart pounding, trouble breathing, trembling, sweating, or being easily startled.

Other times, anxiety disorders can include ongoing, unwanted thoughts, or repetitive behaviors. "Honestly, I kind of liked the fact that I was hyper-aware after I got back from my deployment. I figured that it was a good thing since it helped keep me alive over there. But as time went by I noticed it was just too much for my life here. It prevented me from enjoying even the simplest activities."

Common anxiety disorders include panic disorder, social phobia, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and [posttraumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#). No matter which type of condition you may have, it is important to know that most people with anxiety disorders can be helped with professional care.

Some people develop an anxiety disorder following severe trauma or a life-threatening event. For others, stressful life events such as transitioning from one life change to another or difficult work situations contribute to anxiety disorders. It can be hard for some people to "turn off" some of the strategies and behaviors that were necessary for stressful situations.

What are the signs of anxiety disorders?

A wide variety of symptoms may be signs of an anxiety disorder, some of which may be physical symptoms:

Trembling, twitching, or shaking

Feeling a fullness in the throat or chest

Having difficulty catching your breath

Feeling like your heart is pounding

[Feeling dizzy](#) or lightheaded

Sweating or cold, clammy hands

Feeling jumpy

Having aches, tense muscles, or soreness

Feeling extremely tired

[Having trouble falling asleep or getting a good night's rest](#)

You might also have symptoms that impact your emotions, thoughts, or behavior, like:

Feeling restless

[Feeling on edge](#) or keyed up

Being angry or irritable

Worrying about everyday decisions for several days in a row

Fearing that something bad is going to happen

Feeling doomed

Becoming easily distracted

Having difficulty concentrating

Feeling like your mind goes blank

Finding it **hard to do your work** or normal activities

“At night I would get these panic attacks and just pray for it to get light again. Thinking back, I don't know why I didn't go to a therapist for help sooner.”

It's not just the symptoms of an anxiety disorder but also how you react to them that can disrupt your life. You may:

Frequently avoid certain places or things

Consistently **drink or use drugs** to numb your feelings

Consider harming yourself or others

Start working all the time to occupy your mind

Pull away from other people and become **isolated**

Have an explosive **temper** when things go wrong

Find it hard to express your opinion or be assertive

Focus on what isn't going well or what could go wrong

Not give yourself enough credit when you do well or accomplish something

What are the treatments for anxiety disorders?

There are a number of effective treatments for anxiety disorders that can help you cope with these symptoms and greatly improve your quality of life. Many people have found effective ways to deal with their anxiety.

Treatments for anxiety disorders can involve counseling, medication, or a combination of these. Counseling can help you learn new ways of thinking, practice positive behaviors, and take active steps to move beyond your symptoms. Medications work in different ways to affect the chemicals in your brain that may be associated with anxiety disorders.

“My anxiety didn't go away overnight, but it certainly got easier for me to deal with as I continued my treatment.”

Anxiety disorders often occur along with other mental or physical conditions, including **alcohol or drug problems**, which may mask anxiety symptoms or make them worse. In some cases, it will be important to treat other problems in order to get the full benefits from anxiety disorder treatment. You may need to work with your doctor or counselor and try different types of treatment before finding the one that's best for dealing with your symptoms.

In addition to getting treatment, you can adjust your lifestyle to help relieve anxiety symptoms.

Try to work these into your daily routine:

Walk, jog, or work out—Physical activity can improve your mood and help you sleep better

Eat healthy meals regularly—Good nutrition helps your body and your mind

Sleep well—Enough quality sleep can help you feel better

Practice relaxation techniques—A shower, deep breathing, or time in a quiet place to collect your thoughts can help relieve stress and make you feel more at ease

Get involved—Volunteer, join a club, or take up a hobby to share your strengths and wisdom with others

What can I do if I think I have an anxiety disorder?

“Sometimes the worst thing was not knowing if my anxiety was normal, or something that I should get treatment for. I used an online tool to find out and it helped a lot.”

Your close friends and family may be the first to notice that you’re having a tough time. Turn to them when you are ready to talk. It can be helpful to share what you’re experiencing, and they may be able to provide support and help you find treatment that is right for you.

You can also explore [in-depth information](#) and hear from others who have dealt with anxiety disorders by joining a support group.

Take the next step – Make the connection.

Every day, people connect with helpful resources and effective treatments for anxiety disorders and find solutions that improve their lives. It can be difficult to handle anxiety symptoms on your own and they can get worse if not addressed, so talking to your family and friends can be a first step. You can also consider connecting with:

- Your family doctor: Ask if your doctor has experience treating teens or can refer you to someone who does

- A mental health professional, such as a therapist

- Visit your local NAMI chapter for support groups (National Advocates for the Mentally Ill)

- A spiritual or religious advisor

Explore resources for more information about anxiety disorders.

Learn more about how anxiety disorders may be related to other issues such as [feeling on edge](#), [social withdrawal and isolation](#), [trouble sleeping](#), [relationship problems](#), [preparing for deployment](#), and [posttraumatic stress](#).