



# Anxiety Disorders

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We all know what it's like to feel anxious—a first date, an important job interview, the big speech, a critical test...these are times when most people experience sweaty palms and “butterflies” in the stomach. It is our “fight or flight” response kicking in, getting you ready to face a threatening situation.

Anxiety disorders are the most common of all emotional disorders. Every year more than 20 million Americans (approximately one in nine) are affected by anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders differ from normal feelings of nervousness. Symptoms often occur for no apparent reason and do not go away. These alarming reactions can make everyday experiences a source of potential terror. If left untreated, anxiety disorders can make people take extreme measures (such as refusing to leave the house) to avoid situations that may trigger or worsen their anxiety. Job performance and personal relationships usually suffer as a result.

Fortunately, these illnesses generally respond well to treatments, and the majority of patients receiving treatment experience significant relief from their symptoms. Unfortunately, many people with anxiety disorders do not seek treatment because they do not recognize their symptoms as a sign of illness or they fear the reactions of co-workers, family, or friends.

## **Types of Anxiety Disorders:**

***Generalized Anxiety Disorder***—Ongoing, exaggerated tension that interferes with daily functioning. These individuals worry constantly, even when there is no reason to.

***Panic Disorder***—The core symptom of panic disorder is the panic attack, an overwhelming fear of being in danger, during which the individual may experience pounding heart or chest pain, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath or sensation of choking, nausea or abdominal pain, dizziness, lightheadedness, feeling unreal or disconnected. Many people believe they are having a heart attack when they are experiencing a panic attack.

***Phobias***—A phobia is an uncontrollable, irrational and

persistent fear of a specific object, situation or activity.

***Obsessive Compulsive Disorder***—Anxious thoughts or rituals you feel you can't control. You may be obsessed with germs or dirt and wash your hands over and over. Some may be filled with doubt and feel the need to check things repeatedly. You may spend long periods of time touching or counting things. People with OCD fear that something bad will happen if they do not do these rituals. These rituals can consume at least an hour a day and interfere with daily life.

***Post Traumatic Stress Disorder***—Occurs in individuals who have survived a severe or terrifying physical or emotional event. People with PTSD keep experiencing the ordeal through recurrent nightmares or memories of the event, flashbacks and extreme emotional, mental and physical distress when exposed to situations that remind them of the trauma.

If you believe you are suffering from an Anxiety Disorder,

## **Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders**

- Excessive worry
- Dry mouth; swallowing difficulty
- Rapid breathing and heartbeat
- Twitching or trembling
- Muscle tension; backaches
- Headaches
- Sweating
- Nausea, diarrhea; weight loss
- Sleeplessness
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Dizziness or faintness
- Nightmares
- Memory problems