

Adult Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety disorder is characterized by a sudden feeling of panic and fear, restlessness, and uneasiness. It is the most common mental health disorder in the United States. Anxiety disorders are attributed to a combination of traumatic life events, but can also be caused by mood, genetics, or biochemical factors. It is most commonly triggered by stress.

Signs & Symptoms

Anxiety disorders can present when fear or worry becomes extreme to the extent that it causes significant distress or impairs one's ability to function in important facets of life such as work, school, or relationships. A person with an anxiety disorder might:

- Have persistent, excessive worry or fear
- Have abdominal pain or cramps, nausea, or vomiting
- Be restless
- Avoid certain social situations

Types of Anxiety Disorders

There are many different types of anxiety disorders, which can range from mild to debilitating. The most common anxiety disorders include specific phobias and generalized anxiety disorder. Social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are less common.

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)** - Characterized by chronic, exaggerated worry about everyday life events and activities, lasting at least six months.
- **Specific Phobias** - Characterized by extreme, debilitating and irrational fear of something that poses little or no actual danger. Common phobias include fear of public places, social phobia, fear of certain animals, heights, storms, and flying.

Treating & Managing Anxiety

The most common and effective treatment for anxiety is psychotherapy, but some people may benefit from medication if therapy alone does not result in improvement. Group therapy is another form of treatment that can be effective because it provides an opportunity for people to share their experiences and coping strategies with each other. There are also many ways to manage an anxiety disorder including regular exercise, a healthy diet, consistent sleep schedule, and reducing or eliminating alcohol and caffeine intake.

If you have anxiety and it is disrupting your everyday activities, please call our 24-Hour Helpline at 1.800.928.8000. We can help.

Sources - Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety>, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders>, and Mental Health America (MHA): <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/anxiety-older-adults>