

How To Manage Your Anxiety

Anxiety

Anxiety is a response to everyday stress. Everyone feels anxious at some time. This is normal.

There are different levels of anxiety. Sometimes, it becomes an unpleasant, strong feeling of fear or dread.

People who feel anxious may feel they are out of control with what is happening in their lives.

If anxiety keeps you from feeling healthy and affects your work, home or social life, talk with your health care provider.

Types of Anxiety

Types of anxiety include:

- **general anxiety:**
This is more than normal, everyday anxiety. It is long-term, exaggerated worry and stress that interferes with work or social activity. This makes your everyday tasks more difficult.
- **panic:**
Panic creates a sudden feeling of terror without warning. These situations are called panic attacks. You cannot predict them. They can happen at any time and in any place. They may seem to happen out of the blue.
- **phobias:**
A phobia is a fear of an object, activity or situation so intense that you avoid it. Common fears are animals, heights, enclosed spaces, flying.
- **obsessive-compulsive disorder:**
Obsessive-compulsive disorder causes you to worry and have repeated thoughts (obsessions) that may be upsetting. Compulsive behaviors are actions that are repeated and designed to protect you from a feared consequence. For example, you might wash your hands repeatedly in fear of getting germs.
- **post-traumatic stress disorder:**
Post-traumatic stress disorder can occur after being in, or seeing a scary or terrible event. Events may include a car crash, a fire, war, or an event where you were or thought you might be harmed or killed (or where someone else was harmed or killed in front of you).
- **sudden stress:**
A big life change such as divorce, job switch or a move can cause anxiety.
- **anxiety caused by a medical condition:**
Asthma is a disease that causes the airways to the lungs to swell. An asthma attack and many other conditions can cause anxiety.
- **anxiety caused by medicine or illegal drugs:**
Prescription and over-the-counter medicines can have side effects. Some can cause your heart to race or your breathing to change. Illegal drugs can also cause extreme changes in your body and brain.

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Symptoms

Anxiety has many symptoms. Some are emotional and some are physical. Anxiety comes from the release of chemicals, such as adrenalin, which cause a “fight or flight” response.

You may have a few or many symptoms. Common symptoms are:

- avoiding situations that make you uncomfortable
- breathing problems (too rapid, short of breath or unable to breathe)
- feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- feeling like you will throw up
- feeling restless or irritable
- having a racing or pounding heartbeat
- shaking or having shaking in your hands
- having problems sleeping due to worrying
- having tense muscles in your face, neck, back or other areas
- having trouble concentrating
- worrying a lot.

It is important to make an appointment with your health care provider for an exam. They also may want to do tests to see if a medical condition is causing your anxiety.

How to Manage Anxiety

You can manage anxiety by learning how to calm your central nervous system to reduce the adrenaline you feel. This will help your heart rate and breathing be more steady.

Ways you can manage anxiety are:

- aromatherapy
- cut back on eating refined sugar
- cut back or stop drinking beverages that have caffeine
- do something that makes you happy

- exercise every day
- find out what causes you stress and try to reduce it.
- learn and practice deep breathing
- listen to music
- meditate or do visual imagery
- soothe and comfort yourself
- spend time outside
- take a warm bath
- take medicines that reduce anxiety
- use a special weighted blanket
- yoga or Tai chi.

It is important to take time for you every day. Find 1 thing you enjoy and do it today. Even small steps make a difference.

Schedule an appointment with a counselor or psychologist. Talking to a professional can help you find ways to cope with and respond to anxiety.

Resources

- **Allina Health Mental Health:**
allinahealth.org/mentalhealth
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (Minnesota chapter):**
namihelps.org
- **Penny George™ Institute for Health and Healing:**
allinahealth.org/pennygeorge