

Medicines To Treat Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety is a strong feeling of fear and may involve constant worry. Intense anxiety is a temporary reaction to the stresses of everyday life. Some anxiety is normal and even necessary. It can help to prepare your body for the fight-or-flight response, your body's natural way of coping with being frightened or challenged. Your instincts take over and tell you that you are facing danger and you either need to defend yourself (fight) or get away (flight).

You need to get help when you have physical symptoms that keep you from feeling healthy and which affect your work or social life.

Types of anxiety disorders include:

- **Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)** is more than normal, everyday anxiety. It is long-term, exaggerated worry and stress that interferes with work or social activity.
You may constantly worry about all sorts of things and expect the worst. You may be unable to relax or you may have trouble sleeping.
- A **panic disorder** causes you to suddenly feel terrified without warning. These situations are called panic attacks. You cannot predict them. They can happen at any time and in any place ("out of the blue").
- A **phobia** is a fear of an object, activity or situation that is so intense that you avoid the cause of that fear.

- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder** causes you to worry and have repeated thoughts, urges or images that may be upsetting. These are called obsessions. An example of an obsession is a fear of germs.

You may also do actions over and over to make disturbing thoughts go away or to make yourself feel safe. Such actions are called compulsions. An example of a compulsion is repeated counting.

You may know what you are doing does not make sense, but you cannot stop. These thoughts or actions can become so time consuming that you are unable to live a normal life.

- **Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** may occur after being in or seeing a scary or terrible event such as a rape, violent crime or fire.

PTSD may cause reoccurring images of the event, flashbacks, nightmares and intense distress when you are in or around anything that reminds you of the event. You may have problems sleeping, and you may not be able to care about or trust others. You may always be looking for danger.

How Your Brain Responds to Anxiety

Chemical messengers (neurotransmitters) in your brain carry messages (nerve impulses) from one nerve to another. Your brain tells your body to make more neurotransmitters. The receiving nerves become overstimulated causing symptoms such as a fast heartbeat or shortness of breath.

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When Medicines May Be Prescribed

Medicines may be helpful when symptoms interfere with your everyday life. Common medicines used to treat anxiety disorders are:

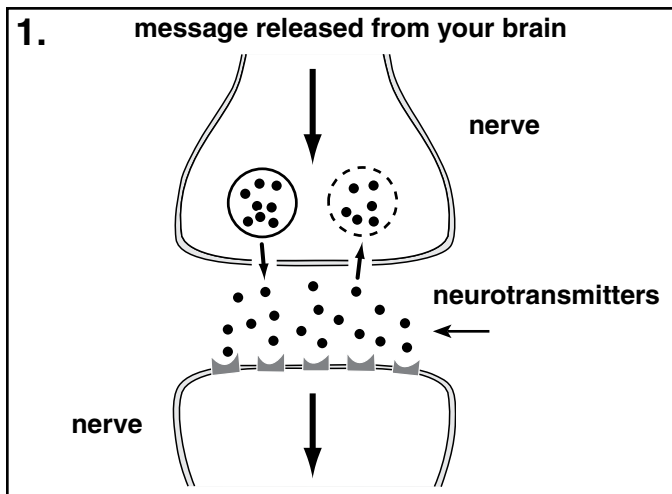
- lorazepam (Ativan®)
- buspirone (BuSpar®)
- clonazepam (Klonopin®)
- alprazolam (Xanax®).

Medicines that increase serotonin may also be used. Examples include:

- fluoxetine (Prozac®)
- escitalopram (Lexapro®)
- citalopram (Celexa®)
- sertraline (Zoloft®)
- paroxetine (Paxil®).

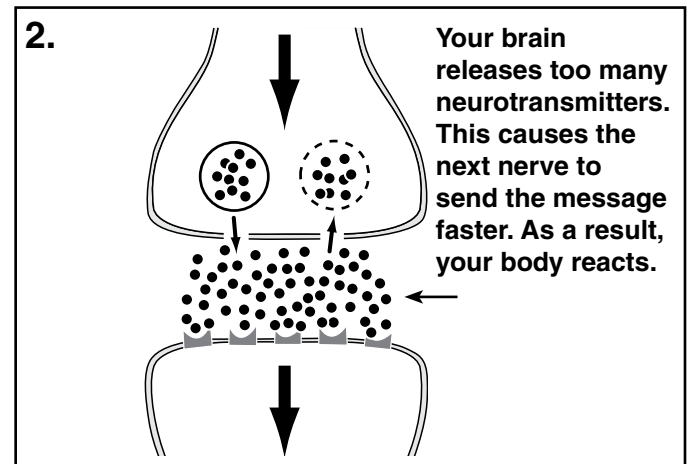
How Anti-anxiety Medicines Work

How nerves pass on messages



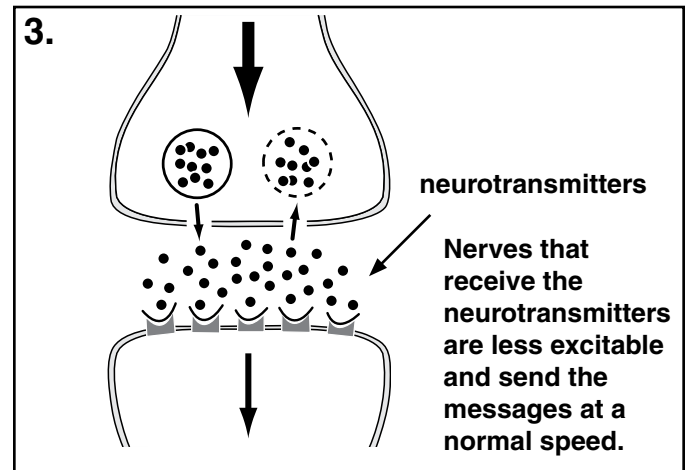
A nerve receives a message from your brain. Neurotransmitters send that message to another nerve. Neurotransmitters can be norepinephrine, adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine.

How nerves react to anxiety



When your brain senses stress, your body makes too many neurotransmitters. This causes you to feel anxious.

How anti-anxiety medicine helps



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Medicine to treat anxiety works by changing the way nerves receive the neurotransmitters. Medicine blocks the receiving nerve from getting too many signals. This makes the nerve less excitable. The result is you feel calm and relaxed.