

ANXIETY DISORDER

Anxiety is cause for concern when symptoms are persistent and severe and cause distress to the person's daily life.

Your mental health matters. Know when to seek help.



1 CATEGORIES OF ANXIETY:

- specific phobia (fear)
- panic disorder
- agoraphobia; fear of being in situations where escape might be difficult
- generalized anxiety disorder
- social anxiety disorder
- selective mutism
- separation anxiety disorder

2 SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Each of these anxiety disorders is distinct in some ways, but they all share the same hallmark features:

- irrational and excessive fear
- apprehensive and tense feelings
- difficulty managing daily tasks and/or distress related to these tasks.

3 SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- anxious thoughts (e.g., "I'm losing control")
- anxious predictions (e.g., "I'm going to fumble my words and humiliate myself")
- anxious beliefs (e.g., "Only weak people get anxious")
- avoidance of feared situations (e.g., driving)
- avoidance of activities that elicit sensations similar to those experienced when anxious (e.g., exercise)

4 SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- subtle avoidances (behaviours that aim to distract the person, e.g., talking more during periods of anxiety)
- safety behaviours (habits to minimize anxiety and feel "safer," e.g., always having a cell phone on hand to call for help)
- excessive physical reactions relative to the context (e.g., heart racing and feeling short of breath in response to being at the mall).

The physical symptoms of anxiety may be mistaken for symptoms of a physical illness, such as a heart attack.

5 CAUSE AND RISK FACTORS

Anxiety disorders, like other mental health issues, appear to be caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and challenging life experiences, including:

- stressful or traumatic life event
- family history of anxiety disorders
- childhood development issues
- alcohol, medications or illegal substances
- other medical or psychiatric problems.

6 TREATMENT

Anxiety disorders can be helped by a variety of psychological treatments, including relaxation training, meditation, biofeedback, and stress management. Supportive counselling, as well as couples or family therapy, can help a lot of people. Experts agree, however, that **cognitive-behavioral therapy** is the most effective treatment for anxiety disorders (CBT).