



# ANXIETY

Some anxiety is normal; it is how we respond to a stressful situation or to danger. However if you have an anxiety disorder, this normally helpful emotion can do just the opposite – it can keep you from coping and disrupt your daily life. There are several types of anxiety disorders.


Most anxiety disorders are readily treatable with a combination of medication and counselling.

## SYMPTOMS

People experience anxiety in different ways. These may include:

- feeling irritable, uneasy, or as though you've lost control
- not being able to think clearly or concentrate
- difficulty sleeping (see Sleeping Problems Fact Card)
- a fear that something dreadful is going to happen
- a fast heart beat
- sweating
- headache
- nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- trembling, dizziness
- tense muscles
- having difficulty breathing

While these symptoms can be part of normal anxiety, they tend to be worse and last longer in an anxiety disorder.



Anxiety can be caused or made worse by some medical conditions, such as heart and thyroid problems. Some medicines affect anxiety, including certain high blood pressure medicines, caffeine, and drugs of abuse such as cocaine and amphetamines. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

## TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

### Generalised anxiety disorder

A person with generalised anxiety disorder has excessive, almost constant anxiety and worry – about work, money, health, relationships, or harm coming to themselves or their loved ones.

### Phobias

A phobia is an intense fear of a situation or object e.g. spiders, heights, closed spaces, needles. People try to avoid the cause of their phobia, often to the point where it affects their lives.

In **social phobia** a person is excessively afraid of doing things in public such as eating, speaking or writing. They feel they are being watched and will be embarrassed if they make a mistake or do something wrong.

### Panic disorder

People with panic disorder have sudden attacks of intense fear ('panic attacks') that recur. They become very anxious and feel that they might lose control, or even die.

Some people with panic disorder also develop **agoraphobia**. They fear places or situations where a panic attack may occur and escape could be difficult or embarrassing (e.g. being in a lift) or where help may not be at hand (e.g. travelling alone).

## Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

In this condition, a person continually thinks about and needs to repeat a task. For example, they may worry about cleanliness and need to wash their hands again and again to ease the anxiety, or be concerned that they didn't lock a door and constantly have to check that it's locked. These tasks can take up a lot of time and greatly affect their life. People know their behaviour is not sensible, are often embarrassed by it and try to hide it.

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD occurs in people who have been involved in a major trauma, such as war, a serious car accident, fire or violence. It can develop long after the event. People with PTSD have nightmares and 'flashbacks', feel anxious and are easily startled. They may also be depressed (see *Depression* Fact Card).

## MANAGEMENT

Managing an anxiety disorder involves finding a possible cause and learning how to manage or avoid it. Your doctor and special counselling can help in this process.

Treatment may also involve gradual exposure to the source of anxiety, particularly in phobias and OCD.

## Medicines

Medicines are sometimes used to treat anxiety disorders. They can't cure an anxiety disorder on their own and work best if you learn about and manage the cause/s of your anxiety.

- Some medicines help relieve the symptoms of anxiety. Antidepressant medicines are used in some anxiety disorders.
- Stopping some anxiety medicines suddenly can make anxiety worse. Don't stop taking your anxiety medicine without talking to your doctor first.

## SELF CARE

- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust - a friend, relative or health professional.
- Exercise and learn to relax - try the ideas on the Relaxation Techniques Fact Card.
- Find out what brings on your anxiety and work out ways to control it. Talk to your doctor and pharmacist.
- Many people with anxiety problems also have depression (see *Depression* Fact Card, and talk to your doctor.)

## Getting help

Help is available for people with anxiety disorders and their families and friends.

- Doctors, psychologists, counsellors and social workers can all assist in treating anxiety disorders.
- There are support groups for many types of anxiety disorders.

See the Contact section of this card, or talk to your pharmacist.

## Other relevant Fact Cards

- *Relaxation Techniques*
- *Depression*
- *Sleeping Problems*

## Contact

**Your doctor** – listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book

**Mental Health Foundation of Australia** ph. (03) 9427 0406

**Community health and mental health centres** – listed in the front of your local white pages

A psychologist – listed under "P" in the yellow pages of the phone book, or the Australian Psychological Society - ph. 1800-333 497

**Lifeline** – ph. 13 11 14 (24 hours, Australia-wide)


**Your Self Care pharmacist.** To find:

ACT (02) 6283 4777	NSW (02) 9437 5941
TAS (03) 6231 2636	VIC (03) 9903 9600
QLD (07) 3844 4900	WA (08) 9388 2886
SA (08) 8272 1211	

In case of poisoning, phone the Poisons Information Centre on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist



**KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN**  
**DAVID S. NOLTE PHARMACY**  
David S. Nolte, B.Pharm., M.P.S.  
701-703 RATHDOWNE ST., NTH CARLTON  
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