

## **ANXIETY**

Fear and anxiety are part of life. You may feel anxious before you walk down a dark street. This kind of anxiety is useful - it can make you more alert or careful. It usually ends soon after you are out of the situation that caused it. But for some people, the anxiety does not go away, and gets worse over time. They may have chest pains or nightmares. They may even be afraid to leave home. These people have anxiety disorders.

There are several types of anxiety disorders.

### **GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER**

Most people experience anxiety at some point in their lives and some nervousness in anticipation of a real situation. However if a person cannot shake unwarranted worries, or if the feelings are jarring to the point of avoiding everyday activities, he or she most likely has an anxiety disorder.

**Symptoms:** Chronic, exaggerated worry, tension, and irritability that appear to have no cause or are more intense than the situation warrants. Physical signs, such as restlessness, trouble falling or staying asleep, headaches, trembling, twitching, muscle tension, or sweating, often accompany these psychological symptoms.

**Diagnosis:** When someone spends at least six months worried excessively about everyday problems. However, incapacitating or troublesome symptoms warranting treatment may exist for shorter periods of time.

### **PANIC DISORDER**

People with panic disorder experience heart-pounding terror that strikes suddenly and without warning. Since they cannot predict when a panic attack will seize them, many people live in persistent worry that another one could overcome them at any moment.

**Symptoms:** Pounding heart, chest pains, lightheadedness or dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, shaking or trembling, choking, fear of dying, sweating, feelings of unreality, numbness or tingling, hot flashes or chills, and a feeling of going out of control.

**Diagnosis:** Either four attacks within four weeks or one or more attacks followed by at least a month of persistent fear of having another attack. A minimum of four of the symptoms listed above developed during at least one of the attacks. Most panic attacks last only a few minutes, but they occasionally go on for ten minutes, and, in rare cases, have been known to last for as long as an hour. They can occur at any time, even during sleep.

### **PHOBIAS**

Most of us steer clear of certain, hazardous things. Phobias however, are irrational fears that lead people to altogether avoid specific things or situations that trigger intense anxiety. Social phobia is a fear of being extremely embarrassed in front of other people. The most common social phobia is fear of public speaking.

**Symptoms:** Many of the physical symptoms that accompany panic attacks - such as sweating, racing heart, and trembling - also occur with phobias.

**Diagnosis:** The person experiences extreme anxiety with exposure to the object or situation; recognizes that his or her fear is excessive or unreasonable; and finds that normal routines, social activities, or relationships are significantly impaired as a result of these fears.



## **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)**

Anyone, even children, can develop PTSD if they have experienced, witnessed, or participated in a traumatic occurrence—especially if the event was life threatening. PTSD can result from terrifying experiences such as kidnapping, natural disasters, war or serious accidents.

**Symptoms:** The symptoms of PTSD can range from constantly reliving the event to a general emotional numbing. Persistent anxiety, exaggerated startle reactions, difficulty concentrating, nightmares, and insomnia are common. People with PTSD typically avoid situations that remind them of the traumatic event, because they provoke intense distress or even panic attacks.

**Diagnosis:** Although the symptoms of PTSD may be an appropriate initial response to a traumatic event, they are considered part of a disorder when they persist beyond three months.