



## ANXIETY DISORDERS

All of us experience anxiety and fears such as the fear of snakes, as a part of our normal survival mechanisms. People with anxiety disorders experience such feelings throughout many of their waking hours and often through the hours normally reserved for sleep.

### Definitions

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Anxiety is a subjective state of apprehension and uneasiness. In its most extreme form, it can cause a person to feel detached from him/herself and even fearful of dying or losing control.

### Types of Anxiety Disorders

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- Panic Disorder:** Sudden episodes of acute apprehension or intense fear that occur “out of the blue” without any apparent cause.
- Agoraphobia:** Fear of open spaces; the fear of having a panic attack in public.
- Social Phobia:** Fear of embarrassment or humiliation; public speaking is the most common social phobia.
- Simple Phobia:** A strong fear and avoidance of one particular type of object or situation.
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder:** Chronic anxiety that persists for at least six months, but is not accompanied with panic attacks, phobias or obsessions.
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder:** Recurrent thoughts, flashbacks and nightmares of a traumatic event outside of the normal range of human experience.
- Acute Stress Disorder:** After or while being exposed to a traumatic event a person can experience an absence of emotional responsiveness, reduction of awareness of the surroundings, among other symptoms. This disturbance lasts between two days and four weeks.
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder:** When behaviours such as cleaning, tidying, checking or ordering interferes with person’s life.

## General Symptoms

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Some of the signs of anxiety disorders include:

- Pounding heart or accelerated heart rate
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Sensations of shortness of breath or smothering
- Feeling of choking
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Fear of losing control or going crazy
- Fear of dying
- Chills or hot flashes

The signs for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder include:

- Efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings conversations related to the traumatic event
- Inability to recall an important aspect of the traumatic event
- Decreased interest or participation in significant activities
- Feeling of detachment or estrangement from others
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Being hyper aware
- Extreme startle response

The signs for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder include:

- Intrusive and inappropriate recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images a person attempts to ignore, suppress, or neutralize with some other thought or action
- Repetitive behaviours, such as hand washing, ordering, checking, a person feels driven to perform
- These behaviours or mental acts are aimed at preventing or reducing distress, or preventing some dreaded event or situation

## Treatment

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Two thirds of people with anxiety disorders can improve, even without treatment, however treatment will speed up recovery. The following are common treatments for anxiety disorders:

- Medication
- Behaviour modification therapy
- Psychotherapy
- Education of the disorder to prevent relapse
- Support groups

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