



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

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

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

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

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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