

# Anxiety

(Phobias, Panic Disorder, Agoraphobia, Social Anxiety Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder)

Per the Canadian Mental Health Association, **Anxiety** is your body's response to stress (internal or external), and may show in a feeling of apprehension, nervousness, or worry that can motivate or warn us of danger. An anxiety disorder, on the other hand, causes unexpected or unhelpful anxiety that seriously impacts our lives, including how we think, feel, and act.

## Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms can vary depending on the nature of your anxiety condition, but for generalized anxiety disorder can include:

- Muscles tension
- Difficulty sleeping

Panic disorder symptoms might include:

- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Racing heart



## Common Causes

Anxiety disorders can be triggered by an environmental or emotional factor. Sometimes, anxiety disorders are triggered by a specific event or stressful life experience. Anxiety disorders may be more likely to occur when we have certain ways of looking at things (like believing that everything must be perfect) or learn unhelpful coping strategies from others. But sometimes, there just doesn't seem to be a reason.

## Specific Conditions

**Phobias:** Intense fear around a specific item, to the degree that the object or situation is avoided.

**Panic Disorder:** Intense fear that lasts a short period of time, recurring and unexpected. May be initiated based on a specific situation, or for no reason.

**Social Anxiety Disorder:** Intense fear of being negatively evaluated by others. More than shyness, this can prompt avoidance of social situations.

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** Excessive worry around a number of everyday problems for more than six months. Significant anxiety may be felt for minor issues, contributing to sleep problems etc.

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** Thoughts, images, or urges that can cause anxiety, or repeated actions to reduce that anxiety.

## Treatment

Talk to a doctor about mental health concerns. Some physical health conditions cause symptoms of anxiety. A doctor will look at all possible causes of anxiety. Normal, expected anxiety is part of being human. Treatment should look at reducing unhelpful coping strategies and building healthy behaviours that help you better manage anxiety.

Each anxiety disorder has its own specific treatments and goals, but most include some combination of the following strategies:

- Counselling, helping identify and change unhelpful patterns of thinking that feed anxious thoughts
- Medication, anti-anxiety or antidepressants
- Support groups, sharing experiences, and learning from others who understand
- Self Help Strategies

## Self-Assessment

<https://anxieties.com/41/self>

- See the above for a checklist of symptoms related to each category of anxiety disorder.

<https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/anxiety>

- See above for an online screening tool that will help you become aware of what's bothering you and why it might be helpful to talk to your healthcare provider.

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/screening/online/?screen=anxiety&xprOpenPopup=1>

- See above link for an additional screening tool that will help you become aware of what's bothering you, which anxiety disorder it may relate to, and provide a basis on which to connect with your healthcare provider.

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL**