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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html>

Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness. It might cause you to sweat, feel restless and tense, and have a rapid heartbeat. It can be a normal reaction to stress. For example, you might feel anxious when faced with a difficult problem at work, before taking a test, or before making an important decision. It can help you to cope. The anxiety may give you a boost of energy or help you focus. But for people with anxiety disorders, the fear is not temporary and can be overwhelming.

What are anxiety disorders?

Anxiety disorders are conditions in which you have anxiety that does not go away and can get worse over time. The symptoms can interfere with daily activities such as job performance, schoolwork, and relationships.

What are the types of anxiety disorders?

There are several types of anxiety disorders, including:

- **Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).** People with GAD worry about ordinary issues such as health, money, work, and family. But their worries are excessive, and they have them almost every day for at least 6 months.
- **Panic disorder** [<https://medlineplus.gov/panicdisorder.html>] . People with panic disorder have panic attacks. These are sudden, repeated periods of intense fear when there is no danger. The attacks come on quickly and can last several minutes or more.
- **Phobias** [<https://medlineplus.gov/phobias.html>] . People with phobias have an intense fear of something that poses little or no actual danger. Their fear may be about spiders, flying, going to crowded places, or being in social situations (known as social anxiety).

What causes anxiety disorders?

The cause of anxiety is unknown. Factors such as genetics, brain biology and chemistry, **stress** [<https://medlineplus.gov/stress.html>] , and your environment may play a role.

Who is at risk for anxiety disorders?

The risk factors for the different types of anxiety disorders can vary. For example, GAD and phobias are more common in women, but social anxiety affects men and women equally. There are some general risk factors for all types of anxiety disorders, including:

- Certain personality traits, such as being shy or withdrawn when you are in new situations or meeting new people
- Traumatic events in early childhood or adulthood
- Family history of anxiety or other mental disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/mentaldisorders.html>]
- Some physical health conditions, such as **thyroid problems** [<https://medlineplus.gov/thyroiddiseases.html>] or **arrhythmia** [<https://medlineplus.gov/arrhythmia.html>]

What are the symptoms of anxiety disorders?

The different types of anxiety disorders can have different symptoms. But they all have a combination of:

- Anxious thoughts or beliefs that are hard to control. They make you feel restless and tense and interfere with your daily life. They do not go away and can get worse over time.
- Physical symptoms, such as a pounding or rapid heartbeat, unexplained aches and pains, dizziness [<https://medlineplus.gov/dizzinessandvertigo.html>] , and shortness of breath [<https://medlineplus.gov/breathingproblems.html>]
- Changes in behavior, such as avoiding everyday activities you used to do

Using **caffeine** [<https://medlineplus.gov/caffeine.html>] , other substances, and certain medicines can make your symptoms worse.

How are anxiety disorders diagnosed?

To diagnose anxiety disorders, your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history. You may also have a physical exam and lab tests to make sure that a different health problem is not the cause of your symptoms.

If you don't have another health problem, you will get a **psychological evaluation** [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/mental-health-screening/>] . Your provider may do it, or you may be referred to a mental health professional to get one.

What are the treatments for anxiety disorders?



The main treatments for anxiety disorders are psychotherapy (talk therapy), medicines, or both:

- **Psychotherapy** can help you recognize and change troubling emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. To be effective, it should focus on your specific anxieties and needs. There are many types; some of the types used for anxiety disorders include:
 - **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**, which teaches you different ways of thinking and behaving. It can help you change how you react to the things that cause you to feel fear and anxiety. It may include exposure therapy. This therapy focuses on having you confront your fears so that you will be able to do the things that you had been avoiding.
 - **Acceptance and commitment therapy** may help with some anxiety disorders. It uses strategies such as mindfulness and goal setting to reduce discomfort and anxiety.
- **Medicines** to treat anxiety disorders include anti-anxiety medicines and certain **antidepressants** [<https://medlineplus.gov/antidepressants.html>] . Some types of medicines may work better for specific types of anxiety disorders. You should work closely with your provider to identify which medicine is best for you. You may need to try more than one medicine before you can find the right one.


Support groups and stress management techniques may also be helpful.

NIH: National Institute of Mental Health




Start Here

- Anxiety Disorders [<https://womenshealth.gov/mental-health/mental-health-conditions/anxiety-disorders>] (Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/mental-health/mental-health-conditions/anxiety-disorders>]
- Anxiety Disorders [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)
- Understanding Anxiety Disorders: When Panic, Fear, and Worries Overwhelm [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2016/03/understanding-anxiety-disorders>]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/entender-los-trastornos-de-ansiedad>]
- What Are Anxiety Disorders? [<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/anxiety-disorders/what-are-anxiety-disorders>] (American Psychiatric Association)

Diagnosis and Tests

- Mental Health Screening [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/mental-health-screening/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/evaluacion-de-salud-mental/>]


Treatments and Therapies

- Anxiety and Complementary Health Approaches [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/anxiety-and-complementary-health-approaches>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Beyond Worry: How Psychologists Help with Anxiety Disorders [<https://www.apa.org/topics/anxiety/disorders?partner=nlm>] (American Psychological Association)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.apa.org/topics/anxiety/tratamiento?partner=nlm>]
- Herbal Treatment for Anxiety: Is It Effective? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder/expert-answers/herbal-treatment-for-anxiety/FAQ-20057945?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder/expert-answers/herbal-treatment-for-anxiety/faq-20057945?p=1>]
- Mental Health Medications [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)
- Psychotherapies [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)


Living With

- Coping with Anxiety: Can Diet Make a Difference? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder/expert-answers/coping-with-anxiety/FAQ-20057987?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder/expert-answers/coping-with-anxiety/faq-20057987?p=1>]
- Depression and Anxiety: Exercise Eases Symptoms [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression-and-exercise/ART-20046495?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression-and-exercise/art-20046495?p=1>]
- How to Cope with Medical Test Anxiety [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/how-to-cope-with-medical-test-anxiety/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/como-afrontar-la-ansiedad-causada-por-los-examenes-medicos/>]
- Metabolic Side Effects of Psychiatric Medications [<https://aapp.org/ed/presentation/patients?view=link-8-1533575726&.pdf>] (American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists) - **PDF**
- What to Know Before Stopping Medications [<https://aapp.org/ed/presentation/patients?view=link-19-1580418376&.pdf>] (American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists) - **PDF**

Related Issues

- Link Between Migraine, Depression and Anxiety [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/link-between-migraine-depression-anxiety/>]  (American Migraine Foundation)



Specifics

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/generalized-anxiety-disorder/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/trastorno-de-ansiedad-generalizada-es/?adfree=true>]
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder: When Worry Gets Out of Control [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/espanol/trastorno-de-ansiedad-generalizada-cuando-no-se-pueden-controlar-las-preocupaciones-new>]

Test Your Knowledge

- How Well Are You Managing Stress? [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/quiz/003211_13.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/quiz/003211_73.htm]
- Test Your Anxiety Knowledge [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/quiz/000917_12.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/quiz/000917_72.htm]

Clinical Trials



- ClinicalTrials.gov: Anxiety [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Anxiety%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Anxiety Disorders [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Anxiety+Disorders%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles


References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Comparative efficacy of virtual reality headset and auditory distraction for reducing... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40750865>]
- Article: The effect of video-assisted teaching on nursing students'practice skills and anxiety... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40745306>]
- Article: Pharmacodynamics study of remimazolam besylate in anxious patients undergoing gastroscopy: a... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40731317>]
- Anxiety -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Anxiety%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Anxiety+Disorders%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry [<https://www.aacap.org/>]
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America [<https://adaa.org/>]
- Find a Therapist [<https://members.adaa.org/page/FATMain?>] (Anxiety and Depression Association of America)
- FindTreatment.gov [<https://findtreatment.gov/>] (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://findtreatment.gov/es>]
- Help for Mental Illnesses [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help/ayuda-para-la-salud-mental>]
- NAMI [<https://www.nami.org/>]
- National Institute of Mental Health [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/espanol>]

Children

- Anxiety Disorders [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/anxiety-disorders.html>]
- Childhood Fears and Worries [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/anxiety.html>]
- Helping Kids when They Worry [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/worrying.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/worrying.html>]
- Helping Your Child Manage Anxiety [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/manage-anxiety-video.html>]  (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/manage-anxiety-video.html>]
- How Can I Worry Less? [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/worry-less.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/worry-less.html>]
- Separation Anxiety [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/sep-anxiety.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/separation-anxiety.html>]

Teenagers

- **5 Ways to Cope with Anxiety** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/anxiety-tips.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/anxiety-tips.html>]
- **Anxiety** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/anxiety.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/anxiety.html>]
- **Test Anxiety** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/test-anxiety.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/test-anxiety.html>]
- **Your Adolescent: Anxiety and Avoidant Disorders**
[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Centers/Anxiety_Disorder_Resource_Center/Your_Adolescent_Anxiety_and_Avoidant_Disorders.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)

Women

- **Perinatal Anxiety** [<https://postpartum.net/perinatal-mental-health/#Perinatal-Anxiety>] (Postpartum Support International)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.postpartum.net/perinatal-mental-health/#Perinatal-Anxiety>]
- **Women and Anxiety** [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/womens-health-topics/women-and-anxiety>]
(Food and Drug Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/womens-health-topics/las-mujeres-y-la-ansiedad-women-and-anxiety>]

Older Adults

- **Anxiety** [<https://www.healthinaging.org/a-z-topic/anxiety>] (AGS Health in Aging Foundation)

Patient Handouts

- **Generalized anxiety disorder** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000917.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000917.htm>]
- **Generalized anxiety disorder - self-care** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000685.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000685.htm>]
- **Generalized anxiety disorder in children** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007687.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007687.htm>]
- **Palliative care - fear and anxiety** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000470.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000470.htm>]
- **Separation anxiety in children** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001542.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001542.htm>]
- **Stress and your health** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003211.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003211.htm>]



Agitation [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003212.htm>]

Generalized anxiety disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000917.htm>]

Generalized anxiety disorder - self-care [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000685.htm>]

Generalized anxiety disorder in children [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007687.htm>]

Hyperventilation [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003071.htm>]

Palliative care - fear and anxiety [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000470.htm>]

Separation anxiety in children [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001542.htm>]

Stress and your health [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003211.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Panic Disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/panicdisorder.html>]

Phobias [<https://medlineplus.gov/phobias.html>]

Stress [<https://medlineplus.gov/stress.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Anxiety* is the National Institute of Mental Health [<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/anxiety.html>] on *Anxiety*

NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

4 Types of Common Anxiety Disorders [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/4-types-of-common-anxiety-disorders>]

Teens and Stress: When It's More Than Worry [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/teens-and-stress-when-its-more-than-worry>]

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