



THEME OF THE MONTH
OCTOBER 2022

ANXIETY



WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe.

Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. For example, you may feel worried and anxious about sitting an exam, or having a medical test or job interview.

During times like these, feeling anxious can be perfectly normal.

But some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily lives.

Anxiety is the main symptom of several conditions, including:

- Panic disorder
- Phobias, such as agoraphobia or claustrophobia
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Social anxiety disorder (social phobia)

(www.nhs.uk)



WHEN DOES ANXIETY BECOME A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM?

Anxiety can become a mental health problem if it impacts your ability to live your life as you would like to. For example, it may be a problem if:

- Your feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time
- Your fears or worries are out of proportion to the situation
- You avoid situations that might cause you to feel anxious
- Your worries feel very distressing or are hard to control
- You regularly experience symptoms of anxiety, which could include panic attacks
- You find it hard to go about your everyday life or do things you enjoy.

In any given week in England,

6 in 100

people will be diagnosed with
generalised anxiety disorder
(Mind)

In the UK,

over 8 million

are experiencing an anxiety
disorder at any one time
(Mental Health UK)

Less than 50%

of people with generalised anxiety
disorder access treatment

(Mental Health Foundation)

An estimated

822,000 workers

are affected by work-related stress,
depression or anxiety every year

(Health and Safety Executive)

THE TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety can be experienced in many ways. If your experiences meet a certain criteria your doctor might diagnose you with a specific anxiety disorder.

Some of the most common diagnosed anxiety disorders are:

- **Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)** – this means having regular or uncontrollable worries about many different things in your everyday life.
- **Social anxiety disorder** – this diagnosis means you experience extreme fear or anxiety triggered by social situations (such as parties, workplaces, or everyday situations where you have to talk to another person). It is also known as social phobia.
- **Panic disorder** – this means having regular or frequent panic attacks without a clear cause or trigger. Experiencing panic disorder can mean that you feel constantly afraid of having another panic attack, to the point that this fear itself can trigger your panic attacks.

- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** – this is a diagnosis you may be given if you develop anxiety problems after going through something you found traumatic. PTSD can involve experiencing flashbacks or nightmares which can feel like you're re-living all the fear and anxiety you experienced at the time of the traumatic events.
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)** – you may be given this diagnosis if your anxiety problems involve having repetitive thoughts, behaviours or urges.
- **Health anxiety** – this means you experience obsessions and compulsions relating to illness, including researching symptoms or checking to see if you have them.
- **Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)** – this means you experience obsessions and compulsions relating to your physical appearance.
- **Perinatal anxiety or perinatal OCD** – some people develop anxiety problems during pregnancy or in the first year after giving birth.

(Mind)

EFFECTS OF ANXIETY ON YOUR BODY

These can include:

- A churning feeling in your stomach
- Feeling light-headed or dizzy
- Pins and needles
- Feeling restless or unable to sit still
- Headaches, backache or other aches and pains
- Faster breathing
- A fast, thumping or irregular heartbeat
- Sweating or hot flushes
- Sleep problems
- Grinding your teeth, especially at night
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Needing the toilet more or less often
- Changes in your sex drive
- Having panic attacks.



EFFECTS OF ANXIETY ON YOUR MIND

These can include:

- Feeling tense, nervous or unable to relax
- Having a sense of dread, or fearing the worst
- Feeling like the world is speeding up or slowing down
- Feeling like other people can see you're anxious and are looking at you
- Feeling like you can't stop worrying, or that bad things will happen if you stop worrying
- Worrying about anxiety itself, for example worrying about when panic attacks might happen
- Wanting lots of reassurance from other people or worrying that people are angry or upset with you
- Worrying that you're losing touch with reality
- Low mood and depression
- Rumination – thinking a lot about bad experiences, or thinking over a situation again and again
- Depersonalisation – a type of dissociation where you feel disconnected from your mind or body, or like you are a character that you are watching in a film
- Derealisation – another type of dissociation where you feel disconnected from the world around you, or like the world isn't real
- Worrying a lot about things that might happen in the future – you can read more about these sorts of worries on the Anxiety UK website.



WHAT CAUSES ANXIETY?

Everyone's experience of anxiety is different, which makes it hard to know exactly what causes anxiety problems. There can be many factors involved such as:

- Past or childhood experiences
- Your current life situation
- Physical and mental health problems
- Drugs and medication

PAST OR CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Difficult experiences in childhood, adolescence or adulthood are a common trigger for anxiety problems. Going through stress and trauma when you're very young is likely to have a particularly big impact. Experiences which can trigger anxiety problems include things like:

- Physical or emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Losing a parent
- Being bullied or being socially excluded
- Experiencing racism.

YOUR CURRENT LIFE SITUATION

Current problems in your life can also trigger anxiety. For example:

- Exhaustion or a build-up of stress
- Lots of change or uncertainty
- Feeling under pressure while studying or in work
- Long working hours
- Being out of work
- Money problems
- Housing problems and homelessness
- Worrying about the environment or natural disasters (sometimes called climate anxiety or eco-anxiety)
- Losing someone close to you (sometimes called bereavement)
- Feeling lonely or isolated
- Being abused, bullied or harassed, including experiencing racism.

PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Other health problems can sometimes cause anxiety, or might make it worse. For example:

- Physical health problems – living with a serious, ongoing or life-threatening physical health condition can sometimes trigger anxiety.
- Other mental health problems – it's also common to develop anxiety while living with other mental health problems, such as depression.

DRUGS AND MEDICATION

Anxiety can sometimes be a side effect of taking:

- Some psychiatric medications
- Some medications for physical health problems
- Recreational drugs and alcohol.

HOW DO I ACCESS TREATMENT?

To get treatment on the NHS, the first step is normally to visit your GP. They will do an assessment, which might include asking you to fill in a questionnaire about how often you feel worried, anxious and nervous.

They should then explain your treatment options to you, and you can decide together what might suit you best.

SELF-CARE

Living with anxiety can be very difficult, but there are steps you can take that might help. Here are some tips you may want to consider.



TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST

Talking to someone you trust about what's making you anxious could be a relief. It may be that just having someone listen to you and show they care can help in itself.



TRY TO MANAGE YOUR WORRIES

Anxiety can make it really hard to stop worrying. It can be helpful to try different ways of addressing these worries. For example, you could:

- Set aside a specific time to focus on your worries – so you can reassure yourself you haven't forgotten to think about them. Some people find it helps to set a timer.
- Write down your worries and keep them in a particular place – for example, you could write them in a notebook, or on pieces of paper you put in an envelope or jar.



LOOK AFTER YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Try to get enough sleep. Sleep can give you the energy to cope with difficult feelings and experiences.
- Think about your diet. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels.
- Try to do some physical activity. Exercise can be really helpful for your mental wellbeing.

KEEP A DIARY



It might help to make a note of what happens when you get anxious or have a panic attack. This could help you spot patterns in what triggers these experiences for you, or notice early signs that they are beginning to happen.

You could also make a note of what's going well. Living with anxiety can mean you think a lot about things that worry you or are hard to do. It's important to be kind to yourself and notice the good things too.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Here are some sources you may find useful if you need support with anxiety.

Anxiety Care UK

anxietycare.org.uk

Helps people with anxiety disorders.

Anxiety UK

03444 775 554 (helpline)

07537 416 905 (text)

anxietyuk.org.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

bacp.co.uk

Professional body for talking therapy and counselling.

No More Panic

nomorepanic.co.uk

Provides information, support and advice for those with panic disorder, anxiety, phobias or OCD, including a forum and chat room.

No Panic

0300 7729844

nopanic.org.uk

Provides a helpline, step-by-step programmes, and support for people with anxiety disorders.

LSP'S SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT TEAM

If you have any concerns at all, please don't hesitate to contact a member of our Safeguarding and Prevent team:

Safeguarding and Prevent Officer: Andy Hamer

Email: andy.hamer@learningskillspartnership.com

Number: 07526 168286

Deputy Safeguarding Officer: Phil Cawthra

Email: phil.cawthra@learningskillspartnership.com

Number: 07773 537452



MORE INFORMATION

www.learningskillspartnership.com
info@learningskillspartnership.com

