

Anxiety

Anxiety is a **common** symptom experienced in movement disorders. It may have a direct impact on motor symptoms. Sometimes, anxiety prevents people from getting things done, working, or spending time with others.

Several factors can contribute to the development of anxiety: a family history of anxiety, life stressors, individual personality, other mental health disorders, **physical illness**, prescription medication, and substance abuse. These things do not cause anxiety; however they may increase your risk of developing problems with anxiety.

Anxiety is a common experience for many people at various times during their life. At times, it is useful and can even be protective.

Everyone experiences mild nervousness and tension for a short duration before, during, or after a particular activity from time to time. This is considered normal.

Anxiety becomes concerning when it is frequent, lasts a long time, and is affecting your daily life. This may then be an anxiety disorder.

This handout will explain the **signs** of anxiety disorders, the **types** of anxiety disorders, **treatments** and **strategies** to control anxiety, and **resources** for further information.

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Anxiety

What are the signs of an anxiety disorder?

All anxiety disorders share some common signs or symptoms:

- **Emotional** symptoms (how you feel)
 - For example, you may feel more afraid than typical of everyday situations.
- **Cognitive** symptoms (how you think)
 - For example, you may often think or worry about something that is not likely to happen.
- **Physical** symptoms (how your body feels)
 - For example, your anxiety may cause you to have:
 - A very fast heartbeat
 - Problems breathing
 - Trembling or shaking
 - Sweating
 - Dizziness
 - Upset stomach
- **Behavioural** symptoms (what you do)
 - For example, you may avoid places or things that cause you a lot of anxiety, like public places or parties.



At times, it's normal for everyone to have some of these symptoms. If you have them often, they are powerful, or they get in the way of your daily life, you may have an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety

Some people may have more than one anxiety disorder. What causes the fear or anxiety is what makes these disorders different.

Types of anxiety disorders include:

Generalized anxiety

People with this disorder can't stop worrying about everyday things. They expect bad things will happen, even if there is no real reason to worry. Their worry or anxiety gets in the way of their daily life.

Social anxiety

This is an intense fear of social situations. People with this disorder worry about being watched or judged by other people or being embarrassed in public. They may be afraid of meeting or talking with new people, eating in public, or speaking in a group.

Phobias

A phobia is an intense fear of something that may not cause any danger. Some common examples of phobias include a fear of animals, heights, closed-in-spaces, or getting a needle.

Panic disorder

Someone has a panic disorder if they often have **panic attacks** without warning. Panic attacks are sudden and powerful feelings of fear. During a panic attack, people have such strong body signs (like a very fast heartbeat or problems breathing) that they may believe they are losing control or are going to die.

People with this disorder worry about when and where the next panic attack will happen. They stay away from places or things they think might cause a panic attack. Sometimes their worry is so intense that they can't leave their home.

Anxiety

How can anxiety be treated?

Therapy, medicine, or combining these together can help treat anxiety disorders.

A healthy lifestyle can also help manage your anxiety.

Therapy

The type of therapy most often used to treat anxiety disorders is called **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**. CBT can help you to change how you think and what you do during certain situations. These changes can help you feel better. Therapy helps you face your fears and learn new skills to cope with things that cause your anxiety.

Healthy lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle can help your mental and physical health. Here are some things you can do to stay healthy and reduce your anxiety:

Eat healthy foods

Eating a variety of healthy foods will help keep your body strong. This will help you cope with stress better.



Exercise

Exercise helps reduce stress and improve your mood. Try to do at least 2 and a half hours of moderate to vigorous exercise each week. Talk to your health care team before starting a new exercise routine.



Anxiety

Stop smoking and reduce caffeine

Nicotine (in cigarettes) and caffeine are stimulants. This means they speed up your body instead of relaxing it. This can make symptoms of anxiety worse. Try to reduce or remove nicotine or caffeine from your daily habits.



Limit alcohol

For a short time, alcohol may help you feel more calm and relaxed. But, over a longer time it can add to your symptoms of anxiety. Alcohol can also affect how your prescription medicines work. Talk to your health care team about a safe amount of alcohol for you.

Get enough sleep

When you get enough sleep, you can cope with stress better. Most people need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep to feel their best. This is different for everyone. Going to bed and getting up at the same time each day can help.



Do relaxation exercises

Relaxation exercises like deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation can help decrease your anxiety. Talk to your health care team about how to do these properly. Try to do 15 to 20 minutes of relaxation exercises a day.



Anxiety

Medicine

The 2 most common types of medicines are:



- **Antidepressant medicines**

These medicines are most often used to treat depression, but they can also help with anxiety disorders.

Examples of antidepressant medicines used to treat anxiety disorders include:

- paroxetine
- sertraline
- venlafaxine XR

It may take many weeks after starting these medicines before you notice your symptoms getting better.

- **Benzodiazepines**

These medicines work more quickly to reduce your anxiety and relax you. They are often used if you are in crisis. Depending on the kind of medication, you may feel better within 30 minutes to 4 hours.

Benzodiazepines are usually only prescribed for a short time because they have strong side effects and can be addictive. They are not used to treat anxiety over a longer time.

Examples of benzodiazepines used to treat anxiety disorders include:

- alprazolam
- clonazepam
- lorazepam

Anxiety

Websites



Anxiety Canada www.anxietycanada.ca

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health www.camh.ca

Anxiety Disorders Association of America www.adaa.org

National Institute of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov/anxiety

Anxiety Research and Treatment Centre www.anxietytreatment.ca

Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments www.canmat.org

Self-management and support

AbilitiCBT <https://myicbt.com/home>

TeleCBT <https://telecbt.ca/ohip/>

Mood Gym www.moodgym.anu.edu.au

Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions www.healthy-living-now.ca/

Online Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Class www.palousemindfulness.com

Progressive muscle relaxation www.anxietybc.com and search progressive muscle relaxation

Dietitian services www.EatRightOntario.ca or call 1-877-510-5102

Ontario Drug & Alcohol Helpline www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca or call 1-800-565-8603

Apps

Mental Health App Library <https://www.shn.ca/mental-health/mental-health-app-library/>

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