

EVERYDAY  HEALTH™

YOUR ULTIMATE ANTI-ANXIETY GUIDE

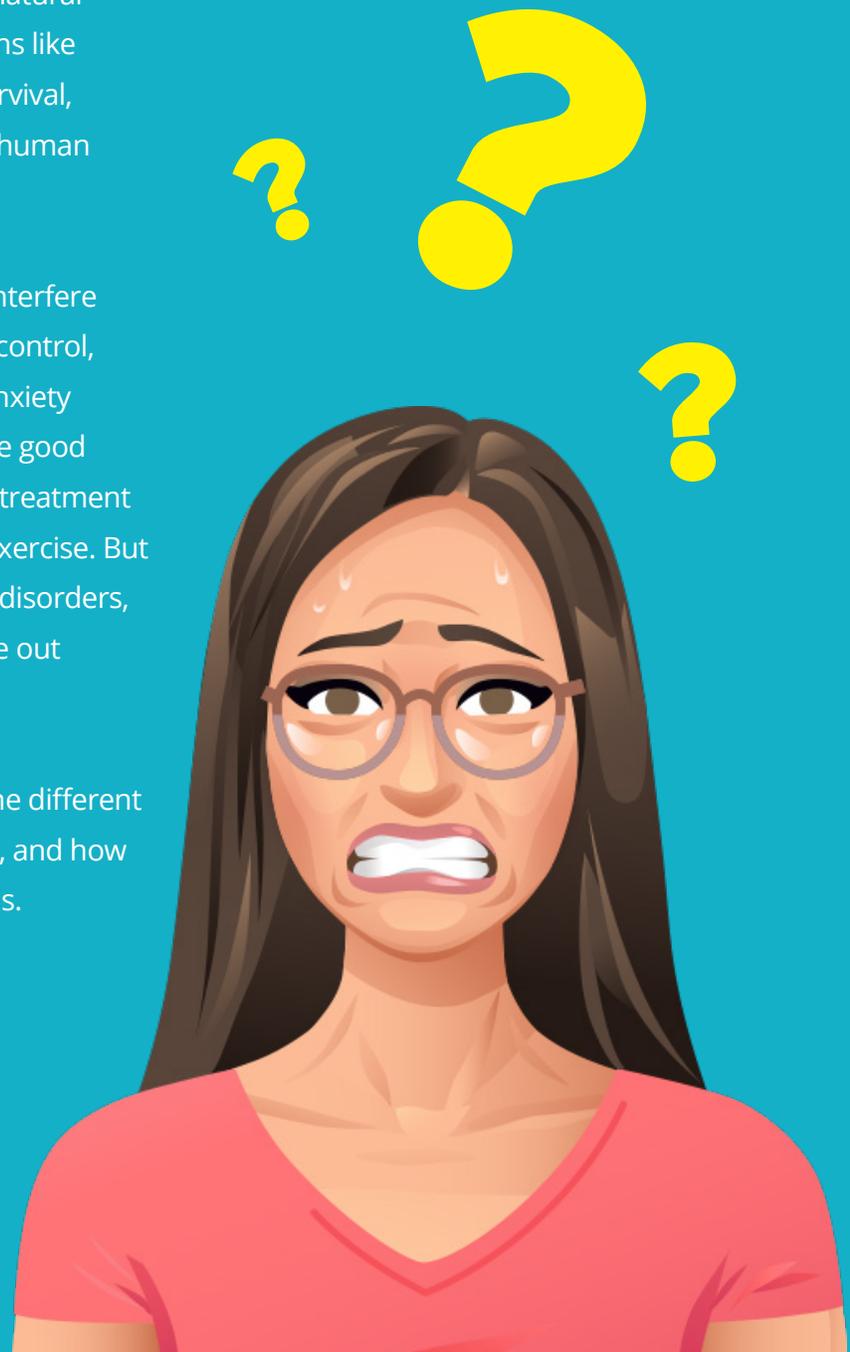
Learn how to take control of your anxiety, whether it's fleeting or an actual disorder.

Do I Have an Anxiety Disorder or Am I Just Anxious? What's the Difference?

Everybody gets anxious from time to time — that nervous, uneasy, worried feeling that's part of the body's natural reaction to stress. What's more, negative emotions like sadness, anger, and fear are important to our survival, and emotional discomfort is a normal, universal human experience.

If you have feelings of fear or nervousness that interfere with daily life or become excessive or difficult to control, however, you may actually have a diagnosable anxiety disorder that requires therapy or medication. The good news is that anxiety disorders are common, and treatment can sometimes be as simple as getting enough exercise. But since there are several different types of anxiety disorders, the first step if you think you have one is to figure out exactly what type it might be.

To help, we've put together this quick guide on the different anxiety disorders, how they're typically managed, and how you can stay calmer whatever your anxiety level is.



4 Types of Anxiety Disorders (Plus One Related Condition)



1 Generalized Anxiety Disorder

If worries about daily routines and occurrences become all-consuming even when you have no apparent cause for concern, you may have generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). Its symptoms can be both psychological and physical and include:

- Excessive worry about everyday things
- Restlessness and inability to relax
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleep issues, such as trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Irritability
- Feeling that everything will turn out badly
- Muscle tension and muscle aches
- Fatigue

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Social Anxiety Disorder

It's common for social situations to make you a little anxious -- if you feel nervous before a party or when meeting new people, say. But if those feelings are particularly intense and last for at least six months, you may have social anxiety disorder. People with the disorder tend to:

- Feel anxious about being around and talking with other people
- Feel very self-conscious or embarrassed in front of other people
- Have a difficult time making and keeping friends
- Avoid face-to-face interactions and only interact via technology
- Use alcohol or drugs to function in social situations

The physical symptoms of social anxiety disorder often include:

- Blushing
- Profuse sweating
- Nausea and other gastrointestinal issues, including diarrhea
- Rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty breathing
- Headaches
- Light-headedness and feeling like you're going to pass out
- Trembling
- Muscle tension and twitching

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Panic Disorder

Feeling a sense of heart-racing, dizzying panic on a particularly turbulent flight or before giving an important presentation is normal, but panic attacks and panic disorder are far more serious. Panic attacks happen in the absence of a threat and can last for up to an hour or longer, and in panic disorder, these attacks are recurrent and can happen at any time — often causing people to continuously worry that more attacks will occur.

At least four of the following symptoms are typically present in panic attacks:

- Heart palpitations (pounding or racing heartbeat)
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling like you're choking
- Numbness or tingling, especially in the hands
- Feeling hot or feeling a cold chill
- Feeling dizzy, light-headed, or unsteady
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Feeling like you're detached from yourself
- Feeling like you're losing control or going crazy
- Fear of dying

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Agoraphobia

If escape rooms mirror your everyday life and you fear getting trapped wherever you are, you might have agoraphobia, a condition that often occurs along with panic disorder and can prevent people from leaving their homes.

People with agoraphobia may feel:

- Afraid of spending time alone, of places from which escape is difficult, or of losing control in public
- Detached or isolated from other people
- Helpless
- That their body or their environment isn't real

Symptoms often include:

- Nausea or other gastrointestinal issues, such as diarrhea
- Rapid heartbeat
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Breathing problems
- Sweating and trembling
- Facial flushing
- A feeling of choking
- Numbness or "pins and needles" sensations

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Though it's not officially classified as an anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder shares many traits with other anxiety disorders. And while it's common these days to hear the incredibly neat and fastidious personality types claim "I'm so OCD," to officially be diagnosed with the condition, a person must have recurring obsessions (unwanted thoughts, ideas, images, or sensations) that lead to compulsions (repetitive behaviors or rituals) and have at least four of the following symptoms:

- Overly devoted to work at the expense of personal relationships
- Unable to throw things away, even when the objects have no value
- Rigid moral or ethical beliefs
- Lack of financial generosity
- Not wanting to allow other people to do things
- Fixation on lists, details, and regulations
- Perfectionism that interferes with an ability to complete tasks

Treating Different Types of Anxiety Disorders

Medication, psychotherapy, exercise, and some natural and complementary treatments are all commonly used to treat anxiety disorders. The type of treatment you'll receive of course depends on your symptoms and the type of anxiety disorder. These can include:

Medication

The two general types of medication most often used to treat anxiety disorders — in conjunction with therapy — are:

- Antidepressants (despite the name, they're the first-line treatment)
- Anti-anxiety medicines, sometimes called anxiolytics

Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which focuses on changing unhealthy thinking and behavior patterns through talk sessions with a trained therapist, is considered the most effective type of therapy for treating anxiety. During CBT, you work with your therapist to develop positive techniques for coping with your symptoms, and learn to identify and manage factors that contribute to your anxiety. It may take up to three or four months before you see benefits, but improvements tend to be long-lasting.

Exercise

Exercise can also be incredibly helpful in preventing and treating different types of anxiety, but if you have a serious disorder and fear leaving your house or are afraid that exertion could bring on symptoms of a panic attack, for example, medication may first be necessary to get symptoms under control before starting an exercise program. Always talk to your treatment team to see what approach might be best for you.

8 Natural Remedies for Anxiety

Whether you have a diagnosed anxiety disorder or just feel anxious and stressed from time to time, the following could help keep you calm on a more regular basis. Just be sure to check with your doctor before taking any supplements, so you can be certain they won't interact with any other medication or substances you might be taking.

- **Meditation** There's some scientific evidence that meditation — especially a type of meditation training called mindfulness-based stress reduction — can help reduce anxiety and depression symptoms.
- **Yoga** Yoga combines physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation, and research suggests that practicing it regularly can help reduce anxiety.
- **Acupuncture** Some scientific evidence suggests that acupuncture — the Chinese practice of inserting thin needles into the body at certain points — can help reduce anxiety symptoms. It may be especially effective when combined with other treatments, such as CBT.
- **Cannabidiol (CBD)** Research has shown that CBD, the nonpsychoactive compound found in both cannabis and hemp plants, has promise as a treatment for anxiety disorders, including PTSD, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and seasonal affective disorder. CBD is commonly sold in oils, edibles, tinctures, creams, capsules, and more.
- **Valerian** This medicinal herb has been used to treat anxiety and depression for many centuries. Still, there isn't enough scientific evidence to know whether valerian is an effective treatment for anxiety disorders.
- **Kava** This dietary supplement comes from the crushed root of a Polynesian shrub. Some studies show that kava may be useful for treating symptoms of anxiety. But speak with your doctor before using kava: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns that using kava supplements may lead to liver damage in some people.
- **Lavender** Lavender oil is commonly used in aromatherapy, and some people believe the scent has a calming or soothing effect. There's little scientific evidence to support the use of lavender for treating an anxiety disorder, however.
- **St. John's Wort** Supplements made from this plant have been used to treat depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders, though some research suggests that St. John's wort may be no more effective than a placebo for treating these disorders. In addition, it may be dangerous to take with certain drugs, including antidepressants, contraceptives, and HIV and cancer medication.

To learn more about anxiety, visit our anxiety guide at www.everydayhealth.com/anxiety/guide/.