



“An estimated one in three adults experience anxiety disorder at some time in their lives.”

- National Institute of Mental Health

## What Is Anxiety?

Having occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. A big decision, problems at work, or a big test can make you feel anxious. For someone with an anxiety disorder, however, those anxious feelings do not go away and can get worse over time. Symptoms may even get in the way of daily activities, work, and relationships.

There are several types of anxiety disorders, but the two most common are generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder.

## Signs and Symptoms

Someone with generalized anxiety disorder worries excessively, unrealistically, and consistently for at least six months.

*Symptoms can include:*

- Feeling on edge or wound up
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Tense muscles
- Tiring easily or having sleep issues
- Trembling or shaking
- An upset stomach
- Heart palpitations or chest pain
- Trouble breathing or breathing fast
- Feeling unable to control your feelings of worry

People with a panic disorder have sudden periods of intense fear that begin quickly and peak within minutes. Attacks can be unexpected or brought on by a trigger, including certain situations, specific people, or specific objects.

## When to Seek Treatment

While it is a good idea for everyone to learn techniques to help them manage daily stress and to relax, for some people this is not enough.

*Consider speaking with your doctor if your anxiety is:*

- Causing you extreme distress
- Disrupting your daily routine
- Causing a lot of physical symptoms
- Making you feel depressed

If you think you may be experiencing anxiety symptoms, you should not feel embarrassed or ashamed. Many people have certain stressors or situations that cause anxiety. The key for people struggling to manage their anxiety is not to ignore it. Anxiety disorders are common and highly treatable.

# TREATMENT

## Lifestyle Changes

Not everyone with anxiety has an anxiety disorder. Your anxiety could stem from a demanding schedule, pressure at home or a job, lack of sleep, poor diet, or too much caffeine.

With or without an anxiety disorder, you are more likely to feel anxious if your lifestyle is unhealthy and stressful.

*Tips for managing stress and decreasing anxiety include:*

- Connecting with people
- Exercising
- Reducing caffeine
- Practicing relaxation techniques, such as yoga or meditation
- Prioritizing sleep
- Eating healthy foods

## Coping with Anxiety

- Learn about anxiety disorders by talking with your doctor or mental health provider.
- Stick to your treatment plan. Take your medication as prescribed, and complete assignments given by your therapist.
- Take action. Learn your triggers, and have a plan in place for when you are feeling anxious.
- Keep a journal. It can help you and your mental health provider identify your personal stressors and ways to manage them.
- Practice time management.
- Socialize. Don't let your anxiety isolate you from loved ones or favorite activities.
- Join an anxiety support group. Remember, you are not alone.

## Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a counseling-based therapy. CBT teaches people different ways to think about and react to their anxiety.

CBT focuses on identifying, discussing, and resolving unhelpful or negative thoughts caused by anxiety disorders. Once the cause of anxiety has been identified, CBT therapy can help people work through their emotions in a safe space. It can also help people engage in activities they may have been avoiding.

CBT can be conducted individually or in groups with people who share similar anxieties.

## Medication

Medication can help relieve some anxiety symptoms, but it does not cure anxiety. If medications are needed, they should be used in addition to CBT and/or lifestyle changes.

*Some medications used to treat anxiety include:*

- **Anti-anxiety medications**—These help reduce symptoms of anxiety, panic attacks, or extreme fear or worry. They are meant to be used sparingly.
- **Antidepressants**—These help improve the way your brain uses certain hormones to control mood and stress but may take several weeks to reach full effectiveness. They are often used to help people with daily or long-term anxiety.

## Preparing to Talk with Your Doctor

*Before your appointment make a list of the following:*

- Your anxiety symptoms, when they occur, and how they affect you
- Your personal stressors
- Any family members who have mental health issues
- All the medications, herbal supplements, and over-the-counter products you are taking
- Any questions you have for your provider

We care about your health and well-being and our staff of registered nurse care managers, mental health professionals, wellness coaches, and clinical pharmacists are here to help. If you have questions, please call 855-586-2568, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. MT.