



**PATIENT
EDUCATION**

Anxiety

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Disclaimer: People in the picture are models.



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY of BEIRUT MEDICAL CENTER
المركز الطبي في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت

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What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is a feeling of being tense or nervous.
- It is a normal emotion that people feel when they are in a threatening or difficult situation.

What is an anxiety disorder?

- All people might feel anxious or tense sometimes, but not all people have anxiety disorders.
- An anxiety disorder causes severe distress in your life. It affects your ability to do your daily activities.
- Anxiety disorders are very common. They can affect anyone.

What are the causes of anxiety disorder?

There is no single cause for anxiety.

- Anxiety might be caused by a dysfunction in the brain chemicals.
- Environmental factors and stressors put the person at a higher risk of developing anxiety.
- Heredity might play a role too. Family members are at a higher risk to develop anxiety than others if they are also affected by environmental stressors.

What are the symptoms of an anxiety disorder?

Symptoms usually depend on the type of anxiety disorder that you have.

Common symptoms are:

- Feelings of panic or fear
- Nervousness
- Nightmares
- Sleeping problems
- An inability to stay calm
- Fast heartbeats
- Sweating
- Dry mouth
- Numbness in the hands or feet
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath

What are the types of anxiety disorders?

There are four common types of anxiety disorders.

Type	Description	Example
Panic disorder	You experience fear and worry that occur suddenly without any apparent or organic cause. It makes you feel as if you are having a heart attack or going crazy.	Common symptoms are: sweating, chest pain, dizziness, racing heartbeats, and a feeling of choking.

Type	Description	Example
Social anxiety disorder (social phobia)	You experience extreme, unnecessary worry in a social setting or performance situation. You fear being judged by others, or being laughed at, or being embarrassed.	Meeting new people, being in a crowded place, speaking in front of a crowd, etc.
Specific phobia	You experience an extreme fear of a specific object or situation. The level of fear is exaggerated considering the source of fear. It might even make you avoid common everyday situations.	Fear from snakes, heights, flying, elevators, etc.
Generalized anxiety disorder	You experience extreme and unnecessary worry about many areas of your life all the time or almost all the time.	Excessive worry about family, school, activities, health, natural disasters, etc.

Is there a treatment for anxiety disorders?

Yes.

There are several effective treatments for anxiety disorders. They depend on the severity of your condition and on your personal needs. You might receive one treatment or a combination to reach the best results.

Common treatments for anxiety disorders include but are not limited to:

1. Changes in your lifestyle

- Exercise
- Better nutrition
- Better sleep
- More social support
- Stress reduction

2. Medications

Some medications can be helpful in treating anxiety.

3. Psychotherapy

It is a process in which a mental health professional talks to you about strategies that help you understand and deal with your anxiety.

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a common psychotherapy treatment used for anxiety disorders. It helps you recognize and change thoughts and behaviors that are related to intense feelings of anxiety.

4. Brain stimulation therapies

Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, if clinically indicated

Usually, medications or psychotherapy are the first line treatment for anxiety. A combination of these therapies will give the best results.

What happens if anxiety is not treated?

If anxiety is left untreated, it might last from weeks to years.

- It might cause significant problems in the person's life.
- It might affect academic or work performance.
- Anxiety can become complicated and might lead to depression.
- Severe anxiety might lead to suicide.

This educational material provides general information only. It does not constitute medical advice. Consult your health care provider to determine whether the information applies to you.