

# Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

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It's normal to worry and feel tense or scared when under pressure or facing a stressful situation. Anxiety is the body's natural response to danger, an automatic alarm that goes off when we feel threatened.

Although it may be unpleasant, anxiety isn't always a bad thing. In fact, anxiety can help us stay alert and focused, spur us to action, and motivate us to solve problems. But when anxiety is constant or overwhelming, when it interferes with your relationships and activities—that's when you've crossed the line from normal anxiety into the territory of anxiety disorders.

Because the anxiety disorders are a group of related conditions rather than a single disorder, they can look very different from person to person. One individual may suffer from intense anxiety attacks that strike without warning, while another gets panicky at the thought of mingling at a party. Someone else may struggle with a disabling fear of driving or uncontrollable, intrusive thoughts. Still another may live in a constant state of tension, worrying about anything and everything.

But despite their different forms, all anxiety disorders share one major symptom: persistent or severe fear or worry in situations where most people wouldn't feel threatened.

## Emotional symptoms of anxiety

In addition to the primary symptoms of irrational and excessive fear and worry, other common emotional symptoms of anxiety include:

- Feelings of apprehension or dread
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling tense and jumpy
- Anticipating the worst
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Watching for signs of danger
- Feeling like your mind's gone blank

## Physical symptoms of anxiety

Anxiety is more than just a feeling. As a product of the body's fight-or-flight response, anxiety involves a wide range of physical symptoms. Because of the numerous physical symptoms, anxiety sufferers often mistake their disorder for a medical illness. They may visit many doctors and make numerous trips to the hospital before their anxiety disorder is discovered.

Common physical symptoms of anxiety include:

- Pounding heart
- Sweating
- Stomach upset or dizziness
- Frequent urination or diarrhea
- Shortness of breath
- Tremors and twitches
- Muscle tension
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Insomnia

## The link between anxiety and depression

Many people with anxiety disorders also suffer from depression at some point. Anxiety and depression are believed to stem from the same biological vulnerability, which may explain why they so often go hand in hand. Since depression makes anxiety worse (and vice versa), it's important to seek treatment for both conditions.

For more information about depression, click on the following website:

[http://www.helpguide.org/mental/anxiety\\_types\\_symptoms\\_treatment.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/anxiety_types_symptoms_treatment.htm)