



Lines open Mon - Fri 10am - 6pm

0808 801 0338

Free to call from all landlines and mobiles

Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal feeling that we all experience from time to time. It can affect you in many different ways, both emotionally and physically. We all get nervous about things such as exams and driving tests, but occasionally feelings of fear and anxiety start to take over our lives, and we need help to sort it out.

There are many different types of anxiety. Some are specific fears, for instance, the fear of heights or people. Some are caused by something that has happened in the past. Other types can be more general feelings of anxiety or random panic attacks. Whatever the type, if it's affecting your everyday life, then help is available if you visit your GP.

What are the symptoms like?

People who suffer anxiety attacks say they experience any one, or a mix, of these....

- feeling faint
- nausea
- very fast heartbeat (palpitations)
- dizziness
- tense muscles
- feeling 'unreal'
- wanting to cry and feeling emotional
- sweating
- dry throat
- difficulty breathing
- finding it hard to concentrate
- being irritable with other people

What causes anxiety and panic attacks?

There is no one reason to explain what causes anxiety and why attacks start. It could be any one, or a number of these....

- Stressful things happening in your life such as exams.
- Anxiety can run in families.
- Phobias – if you have a fear of something you may be anxious to avoid it.
- Something traumatic or stressful may have happened in the past.
- The side effects of some medication.
- Drugs, including alcohol



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What can I do?

- Talk to others about how you feel – friends, family or a self-help group. It will help those close to you to understand what you are going through.
- Try the relaxation techniques below
- Ask your GP for help, they may refer you for counselling and/or prescribe medication to help.
- Learn more about your anxiety so that you understand it better. This will help you to cope and may even help the symptoms. Ask your GP for any information and check out the links at the end of the factsheet. You'll also find plenty of books about anxiety in libraries and bookshops.
- Think positive – don't be hard on yourself when your anxiety restricts what you do.
- Exercise regularly and eat healthily (try to avoid caffeine, alcohol and other drugs).

Basic relaxation techniques

There are lots of techniques you can try. Check out your local bookshop or library, online resources or try this simple method.

- Find somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed and get comfy (doesn't matter if you are lying down or sitting).
- The idea is to slowly tense then relax each part of your body in turn. Start by scrunching up your toes, then relax them. Do this three times before moving on to your lower legs.
- Work your way slowly up your body, tensing and relaxing each part three times.
- When you get to your head, tense and relax the whole of your body.

Sounds unusual, but it works! Just be careful if you have any aches or sprains, you might want to try one of the techniques below instead.

Other techniques

- Try learning about breathing techniques, learning to breathe slowly and deeply can help with the physical symptoms. Ask your GP for advice.
- Distraction – find things to do that distract you from your anxiety. This can be anything from doing some exercise to reciting your times tables when you start to feel panicky.

Where can I find out more?

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

www.livinglifetothefull.com

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