



Education for Lifelong Mental Health

What I should know about **ANXIETY**

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is when you worry too much about typical everyday things that you do or happen around you. There are different types of anxiety. Some anxiety can be a normal. For example, when you go to a new place, have to see a doctor, or are in danger. Some anxiety can help you deal with tough situations and help you work harder.

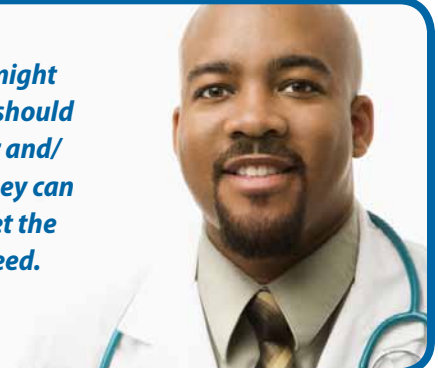
You might have an anxiety disorder, if you feel so worried that it gets in the way of your daily activities and work. They are very common. About 1 out of 5 adults has some type of anxiety disorder. The good news is that there are many helpful treatments.



Why do people get anxiety disorders?

- Sometimes chemicals in their brain are not working.
- Sometimes members of their family have anxiety disorder.
- Sometimes something bad has happened to them.
- Sometimes people have a medical problem that is related to anxiety.

If you think you might have anxiety, you should let your caregiver and/or doctor know. They can make sure you get the help that you need.



How do I know if I have an anxiety disorder?

Body

- Pounding heartbeat
- Tense and jumpy
- Sweating
- Often having an upset stomach
- Frequently dizzy
- Breathless
- Shaking and twitching
- Having aches or pains in your body
- Having headaches
- Tired and sleepy
- Not able to sleep much



Thoughts and Feelings

- Feeling fearful or nervous
- Not able to focus
- Thinking the worst will happen
- Easily annoyed
- Thinking about danger all of the time
- Feeling like your mind's gone blank
- Thinking about the same thing over and over again
- Feeling worried all of the time



How will a doctor treat my anxiety disorder?

The doctor will do an assessment to find out if you have an anxiety disorder or something else. If you have an anxiety disorder, you might need to take medication or see a professional for therapy. Some people might need to do both.

There are a lot of medications that can help with anxiety. Your doctor will let you know what times you should take your medication. Your doctor will also let you know if you should take your medication with or without food. It is important to keep track of how you are feeling so you can tell your doctor. Sometimes it might take a few weeks for your medication to start working. Never stop taking any medication unless the doctor has told you to do so.

Therapy involves meeting regularly with a professional who is trained to treat people with anxiety. You will likely:

- Learn how to face the things that frighten you.
- Share information about your life.
- Learn about anxiety.
- Talk about your thoughts and feelings.
- Learn how to feel better.
- Learn how to change the way you think.
- Do activities to help you feel calmer.
- Track your feelings, thoughts, and what you are doing.

Getting better can take time and effort. In some people, anxiety can come and go.



What can I do to decrease my anxiety?

- Practice facing your fears.
- Learn ways that help you relax by taking deep breaths, listening to music, or going for walks.
- Get exercise by going to the gym, riding your bike, and dancing.
- Eat good food, with plenty of fruit and vegetables, and drink plenty of water.
- Avoid alcohol, smoking, and other drugs.
- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day.

Romer, N., & Perkins, E. A. (2014). *What I Should Know About Anxiety*. Education for Lifelong Mental Health Series, Florida Center for Inclusive Communities.

For further information about this or other FCIC health resources, contact Dr. Elizabeth Perkins at 813-974-7076 or eperkins@usf.edu

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