

Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders are characterized by the symptoms related to panic attacks or panic-like symptoms. **The DSM-IV defines a panic attack as: “a discrete period in which there is the sudden onset of intense apprehension, fearfulness, or terror, often associated with feelings of impending doom. During these attacks, symptoms such as shortness of breath, palpitations, chest pain, or discomfort, choking or smothering sensations, and fear of “going crazy” or losing control are present.**

Other anxiety disorders manifest symptoms as the result of the presence of a certain stimuli. For example, people with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder can exhibit symptoms if presented with stimuli that remind them of a traumatic event that occurred within their life such as being raped or being in a car accident. The same holds true for a Specific Phobia such as the fear of heights or snakes.

Women are five times as likely to have anxiety disorders.

Examples of Anxiety Disorders include:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Panic Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Social Phobia (or Social Anxiety Disorder)

Generalized Anxiety Disorder, GAD, is an anxiety disorder characterized by chronic anxiety, exaggerated worry and tension, even when there is little or nothing to provoke it.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, OCD, is an anxiety disorder and is characterized by recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and/or repetitive behaviors (compulsions). Repetitive behaviors such as hand washing, counting, checking, or cleaning are often performed with the hope of preventing obsessive thoughts or making them go away. Performing these so-called "rituals," however, provides only temporary relief, and not performing them markedly increases anxiety.

Panic Disorder is an anxiety disorder and is characterized by unexpected and repeated episodes of intense fear accompanied by physical symptoms that may include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, or abdominal distress.

Panic Attack is a discrete period in which there is the sudden onset of intense apprehension, fearfulness, or terror, often associated with feelings of impending doom. During these attacks, symptoms such as shortness of breath, palpitations, chest pain, or discomfort, choking or smothering sensations, and fear of “going crazy” or losing control are present.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Traumatic events that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, natural or human-caused disasters, accidents, or military combat.

Social Phobia, or Social Anxiety Disorder, is an anxiety disorder characterized by overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations. Social phobia can be limited to only one type of situation—such as a fear of speaking in formal or informal situations, or eating or drinking in front of others—or, in its most severe form, may be so broad that a person experiences symptoms almost anytime they are around other people.